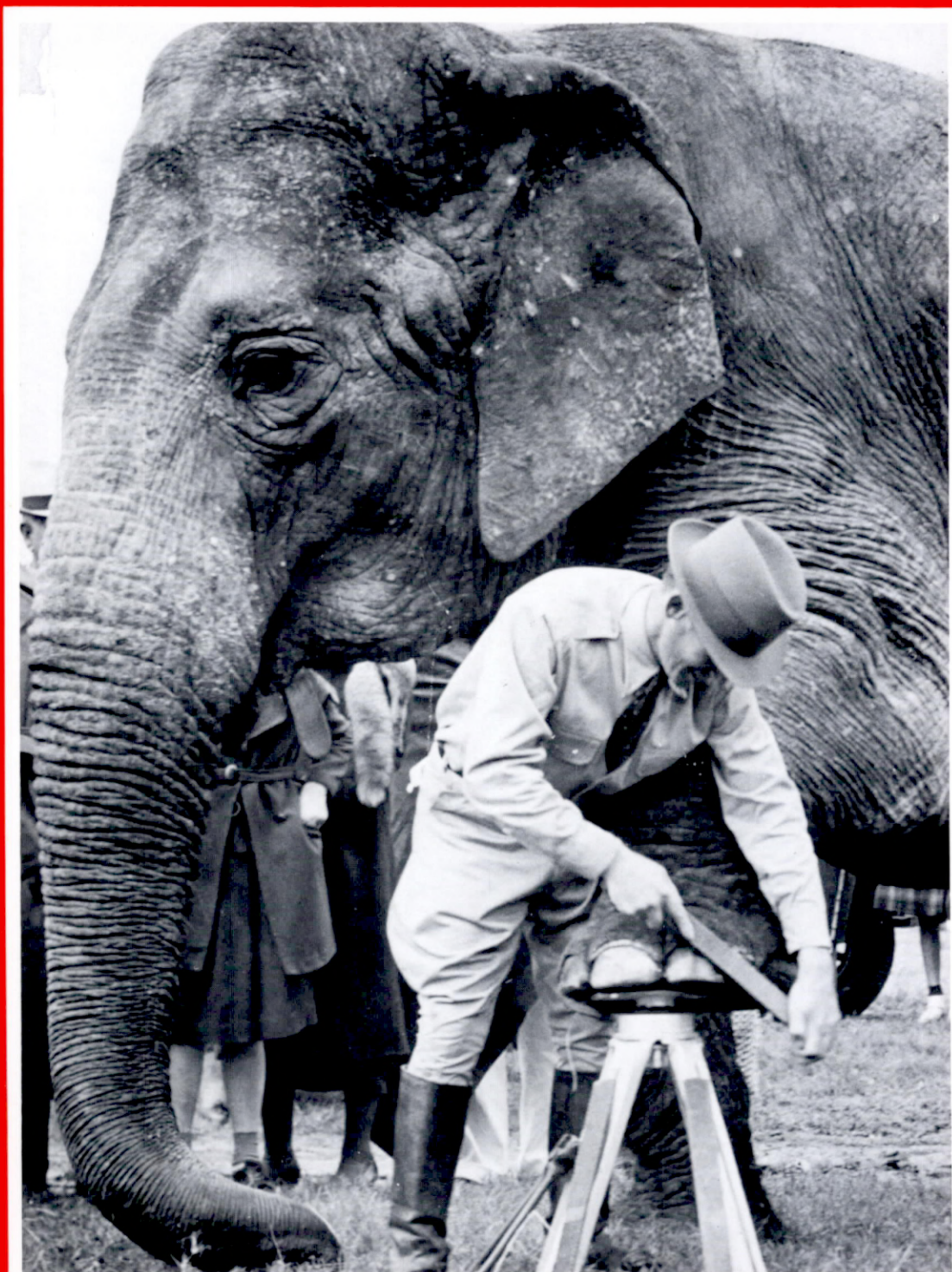


Bandwagon

THE JOURNAL OF
THE CIRCUS HISTORICAL SOCIETY

September-October 1990



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THIS MONTH'S COVER

Larry Davis, probably the least known of all Ringling-Barnum elephant superintendents, bossed the bulls on the big show from 1936 through the early closing in Scranton, Pennsylvania in 1938. When the Ringling features joined the Barnes show later that year, Walter McClain, the Barnes elephant boss, took over the combined herd and was assigned the position on Ringling-Barnum the next season.

Davis was in charge of the three pigmy elephants in 1936. He is shown on this month's cover giving Modoc a pedicure in 1936. Pfening Archives.

CHRISTMAS ADS

This is the last call for Christmas greetings advertisements to appear in the special giant November-December *Bandwagon*.

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This is the story of the revival of an old well known show, M. L. Clark and Sons. Elbert E. Coleman of Dayton, Ohio, who owned the title, placed it on a small motorized circus in 1945, the final year of the Second World War. Coleman's show also made short tours in 1943 and 1944.

Lettering on the ticket trailer in 1945 proclaimed it to be the show's 59th annual tour. The Clark title had not made that many consecutive seasons but it did indeed go back that many years.

M. L. Clark was born in 1857 and could have had a show as early as 1887 if the number fifty-nine is correct. Some sources claim there was a Clark show even earlier. The Sturtevant list shows a Clark Bros. circus, operated by M. L. and Ben, as early as 1889. This title continued until 1894 when it became M. L. Clark. In 1907 when M. L.'s son, also named Ben, became associated with his father the title became M. L. Clark and Sons and this remained the moniker as long as the show was on the road.

Clark's show was an overland outfit in the small to medium class until 1909 when it was converted into a nine car rail-roader. However, it didn't remain on rails for long and before the season was concluded M. L. and son Lee returned to wagon show operation. By 1920 it had grown to be one of the largest overland shows on the road and in the mid to late 1920s was one of the last such circuses to move entirely by four footed power. Trucks had been added before its final season.

In 1922 Clark leased his title to Floyd and Howard King for use on their two car circus. Old M. L. is said to have also travelled with it. But the next season his overland show was back on the road and the Kings selected another name for their gilly railer.

For many seasons the M. L. Clark show had two elephants, both well known to elephant historians. As was customary in the days of equine powered shows they walked over the roads from stand to stand. Mena went back to 1891 and was present when Clark finally sold his show. Ned came on in 1903 and grew into quite

SHORT SKETCHES OF FORMER SHOWS

M. L. Clark and Sons Circus

Season of 1945

By Joseph T. Bradbury

a large sized elephant. In 1921 Clark sold Ned, now a really big tusker, to Al G. Barnes who changed his name to the Mighty Tusko. He made him a feature of his show and the rest is history. Mena was the Clark "herd" for the remaining seasons.

M. L. Clark died October 4, 1926 but son Lee continued to operate the show for three more seasons. Over the years the Clark show usually called Alexandria, Louisiana its off season home. But some years it remained on the road all winter playing small towns in the deep south. Its route carried it over much of the south and often the difficult roads in the mountains of Tennessee, North Carolina, Kentucky and the Virginias. M. L. Clark's show was well known in that part of rural America.

In the fall of 1929 Lee Clark sold the show to E. E. Coleman, who operated it one more week then sent it to quarters in Dayton.

Coleman had operated the Rialto Theater in Dayton which was not only

The ticket wagon and marquee of the E. E. Coleman Circus in 1929. Al Conover collection.

a movie house but also featured live vaudeville and other type shows. In the early weeks of 1929 he organized a 15 truck circus and went on the road as E. E. Coleman's Motorized Circus. E. G. Smith, himself a former overland circus owner, was the general agent. The show opened in Dayton May 4. It carried a 70 foot big top with two 30s and a 50 x 100 side-show top. There was a single elephant, Virginia, which had been in the 1928 Sells-Floto herd. At the end of the season Coleman sold this show to John Pluto and concentrated his efforts on his newly acquired M. L. Clark and Son's Circus.

Coleman took the Clark show out for the 1930 season virtually the same size as before. Mena comprised the elephant herd. Coleman did have one interesting addition, a steam calliope which he had obtained from an Ohio river boat. It was placed in a specially built semi trailer and made the tour, one of the few steam calliopes to appear with a motorized circus over the years.

About the same time Coleman purchased the Clark show the stock market crashed which brought on the great depression of the 1930's. Coleman toured the show only in 1930. However, he kept Mena and the steam calliope and during the next few years leased them out to other shows. In the early part of the 1934 season both Mena and the steamer were leased to Howard King for his motorized Rice Bros. circus. That deal didn't last long and Coleman sent Mena to the newly organized Duggan Bros. Circus. In 1937 Mena was leased to the "second" Jack Hoxie Circus in mid-season.

In the early weeks of 1938 Coleman sold the steam calliope to the new Parker and Watts Circus which made its initial tour that season. In 1940 Mena was sold to the Al G. Kelly-Miller Bros. Circus and as World War II approached for the United States Coleman disposed of all of his former circus properties.

If he was ever to returned to circus business he would have to start all over again. And that's exactly what he did. Like many others he couldn't resist getting back in the business after so many lean seasons during the great depression.



E. E. Coleman's effort to buy Russell Bros. Circus.

In late fall of 1936 E. E. Coleman attempted to purchase Russell Bros. Circus from C. W. Webb, and procured an option on the show. According to the prospectus, capital was to be raised by selling 2,000 shares of class A 6% non-voting stock at \$25 a share, totaling \$50,000 and 1,000 shares of class B voting stock at a par value of \$5, totaling \$5,000.

The assets, including the title, included a 110 foot big top with three 50 foot middles, valued at \$1,500; an 80 foot menagerie top with three middles, purchased in the spring of 1936, \$1,000; a 50 foot side show top with three middles, bought in 1935, \$500; a 30 by 30 foot marquee, new in 1936, \$200; twelve lengths of 12 high star back seats, \$300; fourteen lengths of 14 foot high blues, ten lengths of 10 high blues, twelve lengths of 12 high blues, total \$350.

A 16 KW and 10 KV light plant, \$1,500; one four wheeled Springfield office trailer, new in 1935, \$500; cookhouse to feed 250 people, \$200; two 1935 half ton advance trucks, \$700; a 1 1/2 ton 1936 advance supply truck, \$625 and a 1 1/2 ton 1934 advance supply truck, \$400.

Five of the trucks were new in 1936, twelve in 1934 and three in 1933. Seventeen semi-trailers and two four wheel cages were valued at \$20,705. Three four wheel cages were \$300. Caged animals included a bear, a hyena, monkeys, two lions and two leopards, total value \$250. Eight menage and liberty horses, \$1,200; ten ponies, \$800; four female elephants, \$9,000 and three camels, \$1,000.

The aggregate estimated value of all of the equipment was \$40,000 and \$4,000 was allowed for good will. It was estimated that the season's income, based on 156 show days at \$1,000 per day, was \$156,000. Estimated operating expenses for the year were \$75,000. A 6% dividend and depreciation of equipment was \$23,000. The suggested net profit for distribution to stockholders was \$58,000.

The final paragraph of the prospectus stated: "Mr. Coleman is a man of broad experience in show business and is familiar with every detail. Success of all undertakings are almost wholly dependent upon the management. With Mr. Coleman there will be a capable board of directors and men trained for their respective positions who will devote their entire time and apply themselves to their respective duties."

On November 5, 1936 Coleman wrote to Webb: "We are working on the deal with the idea of giving you a definite proposition, but before we can proceed we must know what amount of cash it will require to purchase the entire outfit, assuming that we would take care of the all the wintering expenses in present quarters.

"With this information in hand, and an option on the complete circus for not less than 30 days, with a privilege of a 30 day renewal by making payment. We believe we can complete the deal within 60 days from the date the option is received.

"Your option by letter will be acceptable, an early response will be greatly appreciated."

The deal was never consummated, although it is not known how much, if any, money was raised.

Original document in the Al Conner collection.

The economy was now booming with war time industries going full blast and the natives again had spending money in their pockets.

During the first full year of the war, 1942, many showmen

were hesitant, not knowing what to expect. A few didn't go out, but soon it was made known that the Roosevelt administration had given its blessing for circuses and other outdoor amusements to continue as a morale stimulant for the populace. Soon the flood gates were opened and more circus men took out shows in 1943, still more in 1944, and by 1945 there were twenty-one circuses all over the place. Titles reappeared that had not been seen in years, one of them M. L. Clark and Son.

Early in 1943 Coleman began making plans for the season. On April 2 he wrote to William Temple at Central Show Printing about paper for the new season. He asked for a quotation on one day's supply of paper as follows: 25 one sheet dates; 30 half sheet dates; 40 three sheet dates and 100 window or tack cards. He asked that they be sent in lots for six days. Coleman also wrote: "The half sheet you sent with the lion and clown at bottom, and upper part blank would be good for dated paper, what would the price be? Do you have stock circus paper pictorial or flashy printing of six and twelve sheet size? They could be carried and a three sheet date used by the side of them, as some towns you couldn't use this size or many of them. Also what would advise for mailing list of a herald, using the small newspaper size, like you printed for Atterbury one year."

Temple quoted \$7.75 for a day's supply of paper. The 10 1/2 by 28 inch heralds were priced at \$60 per 10,000.

The following advertisement appeared in the May 1, 1943 *Billboard*: "Clark and Sons Combined Circus. Want acts of all kinds, riding act, animal acts, aerial and ground acts, clowns, girl acts. Will buy or lease elephant act. Want boss canvasman who knows canvas and seats. Side show manager and sideshow acts. Colored band and minstrel show, legal adjuster. Concessions open. Air calliope player and snappy drummer. Banner man that can sell banners. Billposter, mechanic to handle light plants, working men. No drunks. Will buy 8 x 10 side show banners, stake puller, 50 ft. top with one middle, 14 x 20 ft. top. M. L. Clark and Sons Circus, 4750 Main St. Dayton, Ohio."

A week later the show wanted, in addition to those in the first ad, any good show people and good seats. This one was signed by E. E. Coleman at the Dayton address.

So far there had been nothing in the trade publication about the re-birth of the M. L. Clark show, just the advertisements which were jammed in with similar ads from many other shows. However, there was a short notice in the May 22 *Billboard* which said the M. L. Clark opening which had been scheduled for May 15 at Dayton, Ohio had been postponed. It was now set to open at Fostoria, Ohio for a two day stand May 27-28. The piece concluded by noting that ten lengths of new reserved seats and a new cookhouse were being added.

The light plant truck on the Coleman 1944 Seils-Sterling Circus was the same one used on his later shows. Pfening Archives.



The following week the *Billboard* again reported the Fostoria dates and also carried a Clark advertisement stating that the show wanted a ring act to feature, also horse, pony, and elephant acts, in fact any good circus or side show act. Needed was a bannerman, cook, and air calliope player. Jim Conley, George Barton, Colorado Fred, Buckskin Betty, and Jerry Burrell were asked to wire E. E. Coleman.

Into June the M. L. Clark ads continued. In addition to all kinds of big show and side show acts the show wanted to contact C. V. Crawford, Colorado Fred and Buckskin Betty. The show still needed a good cook, calliope player, light plant man, and concessions help. The lunch stand was open for an operator. Ad respondents were asked to state lowest salary in answer.

An inventory of the 1943 Clark show lists six trucks, including one semi-trailer. The big top was an 80 with three 40's, the sideshow top was 40 by 80. There were 1,300 seats including 600 reserves. The music was recorded.

A short notice in the June 12 *Billboard* stated that E. G. Tanner had signed with M. L. Clark as legal adjuster. The same issue carried a show ad, now appearing almost weekly, in which it was looking for, in addition to the usual acts, another billposter who could drive a truck. Whitey King was asked to wire, either to Dayton or to the show enroute.

A week later in the June 19 *Billboard* there was the usual ad in which a general agent with car or truck was wanted, also a good billposter. The show could use Shorty Lynn. Useful people were asked to write or come on. The same issue indicated the show playing Kenton, June 17; Bellefontaine, 18th; and Mechanicsburg, 19th, all in Ohio.

This was the last information in the *Billboard* on the show for the remainder of the year. It is believed it closed shortly thereafter, probably because it was unable to obtain the necessary performers and personnel to keep going. Later information has the 1943 show in one ring and moving on about a half dozen trucks. The big top was probably quite small, maybe a 50 foot round with one middle. The Clark show followed a pattern common to others during the World War II years of staying out only a short time, but heading out again next season. The problems of wartime travel were many. In addition to a genuine shortage of acts and competent personnel, especially for very small outfits like Coleman's, there were shortages of virtually all essential tentage, rope, trucks, tires and gasoline, all of which were rationed. Elephants were difficult to obtain and it is believed that

Coleman in four wartime and immediate post war seasons was never able to obtain one. Horse and pony acts were also difficult to get.

In any event the failure to make a full season in 1943 did not deter Coleman. He

boss canvasman, light plant man, legal adjuster, colored band. Useful people answer. No hold back. Want to buy, rubber covered light cable; 50 foot top and middle, side show banners, power stake driver, elephant truck, and pony parade wagons. E. E. Coleman, manager, 4750 Main St., Dayton, Ohio."

Coleman wrote to Central Show Printing on March 17 saying he understood that the printing company had cuts for the Seils-Sterling title. He asked for a quote on letterheads and envelopes in lots of 500 and 1,000.

Nothing further concerning Coleman's show appeared in the trade publication until the April 8 *Billboard* ran an interesting article, headed "Seils-Sterling Again On Road." The story noted that Bob Atterbury and E. E. Coleman closed a deal with Bill Lindemann in Chicago for use of the Seils-Sterling title. The show would be transported on 14 trucks, 12 back and 2 ahead. The new big top would be a 70 with three 40's, and the combined side show and menagerie top would be a 70 with two 30's.

Atterbury had been in circus business for a number of years and in late 1930's had operated a medium sized motorized show using the Atterbury Bros. title. Both Coleman and Atterbury contributed trucks and equipment to the new venture and the reborn Seils-Sterling title, last on the road in 1938, was scheduled to open May 15 at Joplin, Missouri.

The partnership between Coleman and Atterbury lasted only a few weeks and the *Billboard* reported the two severed connections June 8. The property was divided with Coleman moving his to Trenton, Missouri where he formed his own show while evidently Atterbury continued on the road with his equipment without interruption. In a wire from Redsburg, Wisconsin June 29, Atterbury informed the *Billboard*, "Seils-Sterling is not closed, is moving every day and doing big business. I just changed the title back to Lee Bros. Two new cab over engine trucks have been added plus a new side show."

In the meantime Coleman remained in Trenton, Missouri for about six weeks re-framing his show. It appeared he might have considered reverting back to the M. L. Clark title when the following ad was placed in the July 15 *Billboard*: "Wanted for M. L. Clark Circus. Lithographers that can post. Prefer those with car or truck. Animal and aerial acts, clowns, side show acts, boss canvasman, cook, grease joint and concessions open. Harry Steel, Jess Bradley, Peg Stoltz answer or write. E. E. Coleman, Trenton, Missouri."

Another ad appeared the following week, but this time it was the Seils-

Seils-Sterling

ALL AMERICAN

CIRCUS



One Day Only
at

**El Dorado
Springs
MONDAY
May 22**

Afternoon and Evening
2:30 and 6:30

Admission
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High School Athletic Field

CLOWNS--CLOWNS--CLOWNS

Acrobat, Wire Walkers, Military Ponies, Acrobats, Trick Horses, Aerial Ballet, Trick Dogs, Beautiful Girls, Temple, the Elephant.

See CAP COSTELLO

and his

Cage of Man Hating Lions

KIDS---Keep This Ticket---KIDS

Seils-Sterling Circus 1944 newspaper ad. Pfening Archives.

stated in the January 1, 1944 *Billboard* that the show was being enlarged and would be a three ring outfit with a seating capacity of 2,300. It would move on six trucks and three trailers. The big top was to be an 80 with three 40's. Two trucks were to be used on the advance and there would be three light plants. The quarters in Dayton, Ohio would open in February.

The same issue also contained this advertisement: "M. L. Clark and Sons 3 Ring Circus. Want general agent with car. Billposter and lithographer that can drive truck. Acts for big show and side show, clowns, hillbilly troupe, band leader, calliope player, experienced circus cook,

Sterling Circus wanting acts for side show, clowns, calliope player, cook, mechanic, electrician, boss canvasman, side show people and acts. "Good proposition open if you have side show top and banners. William Newton, Jr., J. N. Jones, Doc O'Maley, Red Harris, Archie Silverlake answer." The following Seils-Sterling route was given, all Missouri stands, Trenton, July 21-22 [evidently opening date]; Cameron, 24; Chillicothe, 25; Brookfield, 26; Shelbina, 27; Paris, 28; Bowling Green, 29; and Vandalia, 30.

A week later the *Billboard* had no news about Seils-Sterling other than the route which showed it in Illinois playing Pittsfield, August 1st; White Hall, 2nd; Carlinville, 3rd; Litchfield, 4th and Pana, 5th.

The August 19 *Billboard* carried ad in which Seils-Sterling wanted a party to furnish a side show top. Doc O'Maley was asked to wire, and also needed were clowns, a cook, light plant man, mechanic, and an elephant act with transportation. Three stands were listed, all in Illinois: Farmer City, August 16th; Paxton, 17th; and Hoopston, 19th.

One final advertisement came in the September 9 *Billboard* in which the show wanted a boss canvasman and seat man, acts for the big show and side show, a second cook and another dog and pony act, or any animal act. Useful people were urged to answer. Good pay and meals were promised as was a late season. The ad concluded advising Seils-Sterling would buy or lease an elephant with transportation, also 40 x 80 or larger tent. No route was given but those interested were to contact E. E. Coleman, care of the *Billboard*.

The only other mention of the show during the remainder of 1944 came in a short item in the September 23 *Billboard* which said that Fred Schotzhauer caught Seils-Sterling at Mommouth, Illinois. It had 5 trucks and 18 people and showed to capacity there.

In all probability the show closed shortly thereafter and returned to quarters in Dayton.

For the prior two seasons very few details of E. E. Coleman's shows are known. But for his 1945 M. L. Clark and Sons Circus we have considerable information, the complete route, and photos thanks mainly to a little four page route folder and a set of twelve photos sold by Bob Taber who presented his trained monkey act in the performance.

The January 6, 1945 *Billboard*

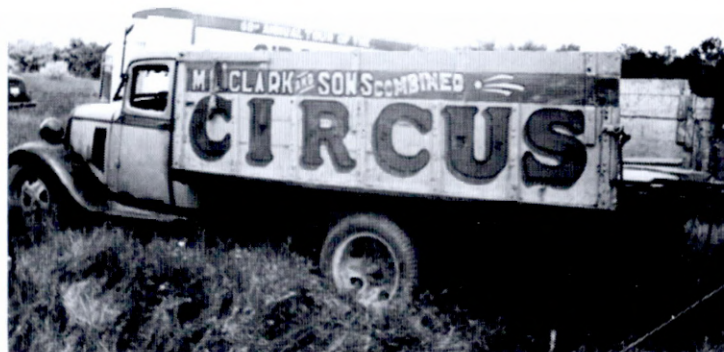


E. E. Coleman on right at the ticket window of the 1945 Clark show. Pfening Archives.

announced that E. E. Coleman would have a 80 with three 40s big top, a side show and pit show, pony ride, and lunch and popcorn stands on the midway. Two advance trucks with five lithographers and billposters would be used. The show had three light plants and more trucks and seats would be added. No title was given at that time.

The January 13 *Billboard* carried a typical Coleman ad in which it seemed he needed almost a full company of performers and personnel, useful people in all departments, side show manager and acts, cook, calliope player, boss canvas-

The M. L. Clark Circus seat and jack truck in 1945. Pfening Archives.



man, seat man, brigade manager, lithographers and billposter, light plant man, and banner man. All concessions and pony ride were open. Jack Nelson was asked to answer. Show also wanted to buy bannerline and side show banners. The show wanted to buy or lease elephant or any animal acts, a 40 x 80 or 50 x 80 top, also 300 foot of number 8 super rubber ground cable. The ad was signed by E. E. Coleman with the title of M. L. Clark Circus given with a Dayton address.

It was mentioned in the final *Billboard* of January that Bob Atterbury would have a circus on the road in 1945. His equipment was stored at Ashton, Illinois, six miles from Rochelle. He planned to open the season in Northern Illinois.

The February 3 *Billboard* carried this advertisement: "M. L. Clark and Sons Circus. Oldest truck show title in America wants acts for big show. Useful people answer. Combination billposters and lithographers. Boss canvasman. Light plant man and mechanic. For side show, girl dancers, small colored band, one man band, or Scotch bagpipe players. Willie Rogers and Blackie Knight answer. Pony ride open. Will buy 50 ft. top with two middles. Elephant. Seats. Trucks. Ground light cable, anything useful. No partnership concessions with anyone. E. E. Coleman, 4750 N. Main St., Dayton, Ohio."

On February 9 Coleman wrote to Charlie Campbell as follows: "I have not been able to locate a bull so far. I wrote to Wallace Bros. a couple of times, but they just write back they will let me know at a later date. If you see Mr. Rogers I would appreciate anything you can find out for me. Is the Freda elephant OK. I heard Alice was a good elephant. It is impossible to get a good elephant man, so would want a good natured one that is not too hard to handle. I wouldn't care if they didn't do much of an act. I would also need a truck to haul an elephant in."

"I am planning on opening the last of April. I had Jack Collins after I left Bob Atterbury for agent, but will have a different agent this year. They tell me Atterbury did not feed the elephant he had of Rogers, probably is the reason she died, and I doubt if was kept warm enough. Atterbury promoted me last year in going in with him, Bud Anderson the year before, and others before that, and [they] beat me out of my money due from the show."

But I had a few weeks of good business after I left and started by myself."

The following week *Billboard* reported officially that E. E. Coleman would be using the M. L. Clark and Sons title. Paul Hubbard was to manage the side show and Jess Bradley was to be legal adjuster. A season of 25 to 30 weeks was planned. The piece concluded by mentioning that another light plant was to be added and the kid show was to have sixteen banners.

Advertisements for the Clark show appeared almost weekly. In late February the show wanted trained dogs and ponies. It also offered to pay cash for an elephant. In March the show was still looking for a magician, dancing girls, and colored band for the side show. Jim Hyden and Pee Wee were asked to answer. The show wanted to buy a 40 x 80 or 50 with two 20's top; 8 lengths or more of 7 high seats.

Sometime before mid April Coleman hired William (Honest Bill) Newton Jr. as superintendent and to provide the after show. Newton was a well known circus personality who had owned and operated his own show until just a few years before. He became a major asset for the M. L. Clark show, and in the April 14 *Billboard* an advertisement was worded: "Honest Bill Newton wants to hear from all actor friends and workingmen. (Fat, Come on), cook, bannerman, useful people in all departments write. Punch and Judy, magician, oriental dancers, colored minstrel band, any sideshow acts answer. Long season, South, in fall over old route. Will buy 20 ft. of good sidewall. M. L. Clark and Sons Circus, Dayton, Ohio."

The following week's *Billboard* said the M. L. Clark advance crew was ready for the May 5 debut. "The advertising campaign for the opening scheduled for Eaton, Ohio is underway. Three trucks and three autos are being utilized. Walt L. Coleman, contractor and advance press, is working 30 days ahead with Howard Eakin fourteen days in advance. Mr. and Mrs. Robert Reese, programers, will work three days ahead, handling house to house heralds. Honest Bill Newton will work press back with the show and handle the annex. Jimmie Ardmore is the agent."



The big top pole truck was the only show owned semi-trailer on the 1945 M. L. Clark show. Pfening Archives.

In a *Billboard* report dated April 28, it was noted that Newton had arrived from the Pacific Coast to take care of the May 5 opening of the show at Dayton. "The bill crew under Bob Akins is already blazing the trail. Cly Newton and his wife are also on hand from Seattle to assist his father. The show is to be presented in an 80 with three 40's big top. Side show is a 60 x 90 and there will be a pit show. The circus will move on 12 trucks, 6 of which are semis. Cupid, a 40 year old pony that has been on all of Newton's shows was also brought from the coast."

Billboard advertisements continued until the day before the start of the season. The May 5 ad began: "Honest Bill Newton wants to hear from more actor friends and working men. Big show and side show acts, useful people in all depart-

The Cristiani-Zerbini troupe in the backyard of the 1945 Clark show. Pfening Archives.



ments, answer or come on. Sweetie Johnson answer. Could use a good assistant boss canvasman and will buy 40 x 80 top or larger, also 200 ft. sidewall." The Dayton address was given as well as several days of route.

Photos of the truck equipment indicate most of the vehicles were straight bed trucks even though the *Billboard* said there were six semis out of the twelve used. Color scheme was mainly white with lettering probably in red. As mentioned earlier the ticket trailer was lettered with the title and "59th Annual Tour."

Bob Taber's route noted: "It was a truck show framed to play the medium and smaller towns. The owners surrounded themselves with a crew of experienced and capable circus people. This despite the fact that the United States was in the last year of World War II. The draft and defense jobs had taken many outdoor show people.

"Despite gas rationing, shortages of good tires, scarcity of red points [food rationing system] in the cook house, the show made a 22 week tour."

Taber listed the following staff: E. E. Coleman, manager and in charge of front door; Evelyn Coleman, secretary, tax collector, buyer, main show tickets; Mr. Fredericks, legal adjuster; Carl Romig, equestrian director; William (Honest Bill) Newton Jr., superintendent; Banks Wilkerson, electrician; Earl Waltz, calliope player; John Parks, chef; Pietro Cristiani, properties; Mrs. Bob Taber, Chita Cristiani, Remo Cristiani, Tony Cristiani, on reserved seats; L. J. Bolt, general agent; T. William Morris, manager concessions; Bob Taber and Tripoli Cristiani, side show.

It will be noted there are a few different names from those listed in various positions by the *Billboard* earlier. Taber's list, as customary in route books, named those who had the jobs near the end of the season. Especially during World War II days there was considerable turnover of personnel on all shows.

A good performance was put together, fully adequate and pleasing for a circus of this size. It featured two well known acts, the Romig-Rooneys, and the Cristiani "cousins," as they were often



called, or the Cristiani Zerbini troupe as they were billed in 1945. Two of the girls, Chita and Cosetta, were daughters and sisters of the original Cristiani Riding Troupe. The boys were known as the Pilades on Ringling-Barnum in 1939 doing elephant leaps. Since the Clark show had no elephants in 1945 the leaps were done over two autos.

The Clark program given at Marshalltown, Iowa on July 4 was listed by Taber as follows:

Bucking mule, George Free.

Singing ladders, Ray Romig and Alice Webb.

Little Man, high school horse, Fay Romig.

Performing simians, Capt. Bob Taber.

Trained dogs, Fay Romig.

Tight wire, Elizabeth Rooney.

High school mule, Fay Romig.

Acrobatic teeterboard act, Cristianis, 6 people Tony, Carmen, Tripoli, Chita, Ramo, and Cosetta.

Principal riding act with Fay Romig, Alice Webb, Elizabeth Rooney and George Free.

How Riders Are Made, children from the audience rode with the aid of a mechanic belt.

Football mule.

Leaps by the Cristianis, concluding with a leap by Tripoli over two automobiles.

Most acts probably worked singularly but some together in the show's three ring format.

The after show featured William Newton who presented Cupid, the \$10,000 pickout pony.

No mention of clowns was made as Taber probably just listed the principal acts. During the season the show often advertised for clowns. Likewise there was no reference to a big show band and it appears an air calliope provided music for the performance, possibly aided by a drummer.

The season opened as scheduled and the *Billboard* reported in its May 19 issue that M. L. Clark and Sons Circus got off to a good start at Eaton, Ohio on May 5.

The M. L. Clark & Sons Circus on the lot in Van Wert, Ohio May 11, 1945. The stock semi-trailer was owned by Carl Romig. Pfening Archives.

Circus fans Robert C. King, Edgar Engle, and George W. Russell visited at the opening and reported the show did well despite inclement weather. Features of the performance were the Riding Rooneys, Newton's pick-out pony, and Jennie Rooney on the tight wire. The Cristianis evidently joined later.

After the opener the show continued with an Ohio route playing Greenville, Sidney, St. Marys, Delphos, Van Wert, Defiance, Napoleon and Montpelier.

The May 6 *Billboard* said the show played to two skinny audiences with the skies dripping all day at Montpelier on May 15. Coleman reported business had been up and down since the opening. A labor shortage caused the show to cancel Delphos on May 10 and it moved directly from St. Marys to Van Wert. Weather was clear and cool, and the tent was packed for both performances.

The Van Wert *Times-Bulletin* published an interesting after notice on May 12 which read: "Yesterday was circus day in Van Wert despite almost insurmountable war time handicaps E. E. Coleman, owner of the M. L. Clark & Sons show, is facing in his first week on the road this season. Considering the circumstances, at least the night show was worth seeing, even

The M. L. Clark canvas truck in Crystal Lake, Illinois June 21, 1945. Pfening Archives.



if it was not as advertised, and the response of the audience should have been gratifying to the performers.

"Despite the fact the three-rings turned out to be one, and the show did not get under way until at least a half-hour after scheduled, the audience displayed patience and understanding in a typical American sports-

manship manner. We refuse to believe, in this instance, that the reaction was definable under Barnum's classic statement, 'A sucker is born every minute.'

"From our position at the entrance with the owner, we saw but one man with his boy leave, dropping a disgruntled remark his way out, out before the show opened, and but another man with a boy refuse to pay the admission price, even when a bargain was offered him.

"Except for the opening conversational-stunt act by the clown and Mr. Romig, whose troupe and animals comprised most of the show, the acts were entertaining. Though billed as Romig & Rooney, the troupe really consists of Mr. Romig, his wife (who did the tight wire and others), their daughter, Fay (charming as well as being a good and versatile performer), and the clown, who is only a beginner since Mr. Romig's son has entered the armed forces, but getting a good start, we thought.

"While the Romig & Rooney dog, donkey and horse acts were good, the audience was most entertained by 'Cupid,' 42-year-old pony owned by William Newton, manager of the show. They didn't know, though, that Newton got a stay of trips as a second mate in the Merchant Marines to join the circus, and that 'Cupid' traveled with him to Pearl Harbor and Sitka, Alaska, where he entertained service men with the same 'mathematical' problem he solved last night along with his other displays of 'intelligence.' How did 'Cupid' get that smart? It is inheritance, mostly, Newton told us, in that his parents and grandparents were also circus performers.

"Newton, owner of the Honest Bill and Lucky Bill circuses himself, now 'shelved,' he says, for the duration, trained 'Cupid' and as worked with him for 39 years.

"One of the most popular acts was the last, in which Mr. Romig invited small children from the audience to ride one of his horses around the ring. Several volunteered, first having the safety belt, with rope attached and held by a member of the troupe, secured around their middle. They

might not have been so brave if they had known what the circus owner told us: That the horse was wild a year ago before Mr. Romig trained him, and that he was one of the fastest horses in any circus ring.

"Getting labor, the owner told us, is one of the most difficult war time problems. An appeal was made for persons in the audience to help tear down the tent at a dollar per hour for adults and 75 cents for boys under sixteen.

"There was only one ring because not enough labor was available to erect all of the tent, the owner explained to us. One center section was omitted. Not even all the seats were erected, and some were put up just before the show started. Coleman said three trucks are not yet with the show. The equipment got in late from St. Marys because a truck broke down. The public address system was out of order. There are yet no side shows as advertised.

"But Coleman says he is working steadily towards building his circus up to the quality and quantity advertised by his advance man.

"The circus started out a week ago, the owner says, and was unable to show in two cities, including Delphos, because of weather and labor shortage, and lost money on some stands. Its mailing address is Dayton, Ohio.

"Unavoidable circumstances delayed the afternoon show, prevented it from being as extensive as the one presented last night, and caused considerable unfavorable comment."

Coleman was indeed having a time getting the season started and the performance was quite weak. From this review it is clear that Bob Taber, George Free and the Cristianis had not yet joined the show. Bill Newton was working his pony as a fill-in act.

Napoleon, May 14, gave a three-quarters matinee and a half house at night. This was the final date in Ohio and afterwards the show moved over into Indiana. The initial stand had been scheduled for Auburn on May 16 but because of wet grounds it was unable to set up. Kendellville was played the next day and was followed by Decatur, Bluffton and ten more stands in the Hoosier state. Renasslaer on May 31 was the last one. A run of 25 consecutive dates in Illinois began June 1 at Watseka. Gilman, Dwight, Morris, and Marsailles followed.


All during June as M. L. Clark and Sons moved about the state nearly every week's *Billboard* carried advertisements in which the show wanted both acts and personnel. The June 2 issue advised the show could use good clowns, ground and aerial acts, and a general agent who could stay sober. Also needed were side show

acts of all kinds, Oriental dancers, a colored band, and concession people. A week later their ad again called for an experienced general agent, legal adjuster, clowns, side show acts, and big show acts strong enough to feature "no acts too big," a colored band and a good circus cook. Some concessions and the pony ride were for sale. Also wanted were concert people.

The June 16 advertisement advised that the M. L. Clark and Sons Circus was enlarging. In addition to those needs men-

M. L. CLARK and SONS

CIRCUS



WILD ANIMAL SHOW

With

THE CHRISTIANIS TROUPE
Daring Feats of Leaping and Tumbling

THE ROONEY FAMILY
America's Greatest Bareback Riders
THE FLYING CLARKS
Trapeze Workers

Prof. Wm. Newton's \$19,999 EDUCATED PONY—CUPID
SCORES OF BEAUTIFUL GIRLS AND FUNNY CLOWNS

FAIR BIGGER AND GREATER THAN EVER!
FABULOUS FEATURES—WORLD OF CIRCUS WON-
DERB FROM THE FOUR CORNERS OF CHRISTIAN-
DOM—THREE DAILY—4 AND 7 P. M.

50

CARROLLTON.
ONE DAY ONLY

AUG 14

TUESDAY

Williams Show Grounds

This Clark newspaper advertisement was used for the Carrollton, Missouri stand in 1945. Pfening Archives.

tioned in recent weeks the show wanted an assistant boss canvasman who could set seats. The pony ride, popcorn, and grease joint were all open for operators.

Little information other than the ads appeared in June while the show was in Illinois, however one bit came in the June 30 issue which said that veteran circus man D. C. Hawn had joined the show while it was playing around Chicago. Hawn told the *Billboard* he had spent an interesting two week vacation on the show.

Fulton, played June 29, was the last Illinois date during this stretch. June 30 found the show in Iowa at Tipton. Following came Belle Plaine, Tama, Marshalltown, Ames, Jefferson and nine more stands, making a total of fifteen played in the Hawkeye state. Keokuk was the last date on July 17 and was followed by a re-

turn to Illinois at Rushville the next day.

The *Billboard* reported the Clark show struck an attendance snag at Rushville after getting two full houses at both Keokuk and Fort Madison, the latter played on July 16. It was noted the show drew a blank at Charlton, Iowa, July 12 following so closely on the heels of Austin Bros., a ten car railroad show.

Although the show was now in its third month the personnel situation still hadn't eased. In early July it advertised for reliable billers and lithographers, but no whiskey drinkers were wanted. W. W.

Clark, Jacobson, Ray Upton, Vetter and McDonald were asked to answer by wire to L. J. Bolt, agent at Evansville, Indiana July 19.

Two weeks later the show advertised for a boss canvasman, seat man, sail maker, and one good billposter. Willie Clark, Shorty Lynn, and Harry Steele were requested to answer.

The return to Illinois found the show, in addition to Rushville, at Canton, Bushnell, Pekin, Lincoln, Sullivan, Shelbyville, Flora, Fairchild, Centralia and Highland on July 31.

The August 4 *Billboard* said the show had overcome odds at Pekin on July 23 and gathered a good take despite some poor advance advertising and a mix up on the lot location, M. L. Clark played to two full houses. Some performers said business was the best so far in the season. It was reported the show was the first to play Pekin since 1941.

The show was still in Illinois for the first two days in August at Edwardsville and Woodriver, then came a jump into Missouri at St. Charles. Twelve dates were played in the Show Me state.

In the meantime the *Billboard* carried a report "that even the lush days following World War I could compare to the present when it comes to the number of circuses, large and small, currently on the road. In July 1920 there were a total of 19 circuses out, but in July of 1945 the total was 29."

August saw no let up in the show's want ads in the *Billboard*. On the 18th it wanted one good act for the big show, side show people, a boss canvasman, seat man, and sailmaker. Also good billposters and lithographers. Buster Adams was asked to answer at once to Dayton or per route.

The Clark show played some prominent stands, including Mexico, Fulton, Jefferson City, Columbia, Macon, and Kirksville, all Missouri in a stretch from August 6 to 11. After Brookfield, Carrollton, and Marshall, the show moved to

Lexington on August 16 for the final stand in the state.

During the short weeks the show had been out the nation had witnessed some of the most momentous events in history. Almost immediately after the opening came Victory in Europe Day, then in early August the two atomic bombs were dropped on Japan and in mid August came Victory in Japan Day and suddenly World War II was over. Some wartime regulations that affected circuses were dropped almost immediately. Others were gradually eased in the next weeks or months, but the hard hitting amusement tax would linger for years. Gasoline was unrationed and became plentiful but shortages of tires, trucks, parts, rope, canvas and other essentials did not disappear overnight. Even though war industries shut down, releasing those employees to the regular work force, there were millions of returning servicemen phased out over the next few months. The draft continued and the tight labor situation with circuses continued. It would take a few seasons to get back to normal.

Three days after VJ Day the Clark show advertised in the August 18 *Billboard* looking for one good act for the big show, side show people, boss canvasman, seat man, and sailmaker. Good billposters and lithographers were wanted and Buster Adams was asked to answer at once. An early September ad stated the billers and litho men wanted "must have circus experience and salary would be in keeping with the rest," meaning a union scale would be paid. The ad promised a long season south until December. W. Richards and Allen Schumaker were asked to answer.

After Missouri the route took the show into Kansas for eight stands, the first being Olathe on August 17. Then came Lawrence, Yates Center, Chanute, Neodesha, Independence, Coffeyville, and Parsons. Next the route dipped down into Oklahoma at Pitcher on August 26 but returned immediately to Kansas at Baxter Springs on the 27th.


While at Baxter Springs Banks Wilkinson, mechanic and electrician, closed with the show and returned to his Forrest City, Arkansas home. At the same stand Honest Bill Newton left the show for a few days rest.

After the single Kansas date the show went back to Oklahoma at Miami and played a string of fourteen straight stands. It was at Hugo on September 11

and on the 12th played Idabel which was the last day in the state. A tour of Arkansas began at DeQueen on September 13.

Mrs. Bob Taber left the show at Pawhuska, Oklahoma on September 1 to take her children to Riverside, California to begin school.

— 60th Annual Tour —



M. L. CLARK AND SONS

Combined - 3 Ring

CIRCUS

E. E. COLEMAN, Gen'l. Mgr.



Permanent Address:
1215 W. Hillcrest Avenue
Dayton 5 Ohio

In 1946 Coleman had this letterhead printed listing the "60th annual tour" of the M. L. Clark & Sons Circus which did not take place. Pfening Archives.

Other Arkansas stands came at Nashville, Prescott, Arkadelphia, Sheridan, Fordyce, Monticello, and Udora. Now in traditional M. L. Clark territory the show moved into Mississippi at Indianola on September 22, returned the next day for Lake Village, Arkansas, and then went into old M. L. Clark's home state of Louisiana for the rest of the season starting at Oak Grove on September 28.

The September 22 *Billboard* carried an advertisement in which the show wanted a calliope player, light plant man, bill poster, legal adjuster, and any acts available. Concessions and novelties were open and Jess Bradley and Larry Tanner were asked to wire. Several Arkansas and Mississippi dates were given.

The next to last ad for the season came in the September 29 issue. Any big show acts were needed with a dog and pony routine specified. Still wanted were a light plant man, boss canvasman, bill poster, and legal adjuster. In addition to those asked to wire the previous week, Fitch was to wire at once. The ad concluded by stating there was a big side show and flashy bannerline.

The promised long season never came off, probably because the personnel requirements were just too great to continue any longer. After the initial Louisiana stand dates followed at Rayville, Bastrop, Farmerville, Ruston and Jonesboro. Natchitoches, played on October 5, was the finale for the 1945 season.

Actually the last advertisement in the *Billboard* didn't come out until the day following the close. The ad signed by L. J. Bolt, agent, claimed a long season, salary in keeping with the rest, and concluded with the words, "Yes, we are going to

Florida." That never materialized as the show supposedly moved into quarters in Louisiana at a location never revealed.

Nothing further was reported on the show until the November 10 *Billboard* in a story from Hot Springs, Arkansas, where Coleman and his wife were vacationing, which said the circus was now in quarters

in Louisiana, but the exact locale was not mentioned. The tour had covered ten states. He said the show enjoyed a good season and suffered only one mishap, the wrecking of two trucks on the jump from Prescott, Arkansas to Arkadelphia, Arkansas

on September 16.

Coleman reported it was the first time the Clark show had been in Louisiana in many years, and several old timers turned up at the office wagon to inquire about M. L. Clark. In conclusion Coleman said the show would open the 1946 season in March, starting in the south and then swinging into Oklahoma. New canvas had been ordered and more seats would be installed.

Some time after the show's 1945 closing the equipment was moved to the fairgrounds in Prescott, Arkansas. The possibility exists that the show went directly to Prescott after the final stand in 1945 with no intermediate stop.

Nothing further appeared in the trade publication concerning Coleman's plans for 1946 until the following ad appeared in the March 30 *Billboard*: "Can use a few more good acts, billposters and lithographers, boss canvasman, seat man and sail maker. Jerry Burrell answer. Light man and mechanic. Concessions open. Want side show acts or complete side show. Pony ride, anything that can get money. M. L. Clark and Sons Circus 4750 N. Main St., Dayton, Ohio."

The *Billboard* carried a short piece dated April 13, 1946 reporting that the M. L. Clark & Sons Circus "will open its 60th annual tour in Arkansas April 20. Trucks and equipment were overhauled last fall. More acts will be carried than last year. Eight more girls than in 1945 and a producer will be carried, with the girls being used in four or five different acts, besides ballying on the sideshow."

The April 20 *Billboard* carried a single sentence stating the the M. L. Clark and Sons would open in Arkansas in May.

The April 20 *Billboard* also carried an ad which said the show wanted to lease an elephant, acts for big show, and side show. Also needed were a colored band, calliope player, billposter and li-

thographer, light plant man and mechanic. Useful people were asked to answer. A long season and good cookhouse was promised.

A week later the *Billboard* ad called for a contracting agent who could handle press. The ad stated the show would open May 5 in Arkansas, but no stand was listed.

After this nothing further appeared either by advertisement or otherwise. If the show ever opened there was no report in *Billboard*. Some claim the show never again operated after the 1945 season, although the several advertisements indicate at least Coleman planned to go on the road.

The July 20 *Billboard* carried an ad with a cryptic title. It read: "For sale complete truck circus. Good money proposition. C & C Circus, General Delivery, Hot Springs, Arkansas." Coleman had last been reported in Hot Springs.

All mystery was cleared up when the August 10 *Billboard* carried this ad: "For Sale. M. L. Clark and Sons complete truck circus. 80 ft. top with three 40's. 2 light plants. Plenty can be made this fall. E. E. Coleman, Gen. Del., Hot Springs, Arkansas."

Coleman was unable to sell the show as a unit and how much individual equipment was sold and to whom is not known. The war years circus bonanza ended abruptly in 1946. Before the season began the six railroad circuses of 1945 were reduced to four. Soon after the new season started many of the smaller motorized shows began to falter and the demand for circus equipment of all kinds greatly diminished. For whatever reason some trucks and equipment remained at the Prescott, Arkansas fairgrounds as late as 1953 when Bill Woodcock, Sr. took a photo of trucks in the M. L. Clark graveyard. Coleman retained the air calliope for a number of years thereafter and it was said this was the final piece of Clark property in his possession.

As late as 1948 Coleman still had hopes of selling his show. On June 14 he wrote to Charlie Campbell: "I had a party that was going to buy my circus but he didn't know anything about it and wanted me to help him put it out, wanted to move it to New York state, he lives in New York City. I couldn't see that as he would be hard to get along with. Dick Brandon wanted to put up some money to get it out, which I should have done. Since I

got back from Arkansas my wife has been real sick so I held off in regards to the circus to see how she got, and now it is almost too late to do anything. My canvas is good as when I stored it, had it out in the air. I had three whistles stolen from my air calliope. So I think I will plan for next year for sure as business is better this year than I thought it would be and believe the next two years will be okay."



The M. L. Clark ticket wagon at the Prescott, Arkansas fairgrounds in 1953. Pfening Archives.

For a number of years starting in the late 1940s Coleman managed the Mayfair theater, a burlesque house in Dayton Ohio.

Coleman continued to think about returning to the circus business. A *Billboard* article dated March 15, 1952 read: "E. E. Coleman, veteran circus operator, confirmed this week that he plans to put a show on the road in 1952, probably under the title of M. L. Clark & Sons.

"He said his show equipment, part of which is stored at Prescott, Arkansas, and part of which is in Ohio, would be moved to Missouri. The show will be organized there for a late April opening, he said.

"Coleman stated that he would operate the show in partnership, but he did not identify other participants. He said staff

members would be named soon. Whether the show will operate under an auspices plan has not been not definitely decided. He said that decision will be reached in the next several days.

"The program will be strong on animal turns. Animals already are trained and will give about 50 minutes of the show. He also said that elephants would be bought or leased.

"Choice of a title is not yet final, he said, but the Clark tag is likely to be used. It was used last on a Coleman show in 1945."

Coleman's plans for a show in 1952 fizzled out.

Throughout the seasons the old Clark show was on the road it used lithographs of excellent design and quality by the Donaldson Litho Co. of Newport, Kentucky. Some stock paper from Erie and Riverside was also

used. It is believed that Coleman utilized much of this paper on the revival of M. L. Clark during the war years. In the late 1940s and on through the 1950s, the great years of circus collecting, there seemed to be an inordinate amount of M. L. Clark posters for sale, even multi-sheets. These appeared on the lists of C. Spencer Chambers, P. M. McClintock and other famous circusiana dealers in the past. Much of this paper is believed to have come by way of Coleman rather than dating back to the original Clark wagon show.

The late Homer Walton had two articles on the original M. L. Clark show published in *Bandwagon*. The November-December 1958 issue contained a story about the Clark elephants Ned and Mena. The March-April 1965 had a history of the show.

Some material in this article came from the Pfening Archives and the Al Conover collection.

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FARINI THE GREAT

By Shane Peacock

In the summer of 1860, when the great French high wire artiste Blondin returned to Niagara Falls to repeat his historic performances of the previous year, he expected to do so alone. But by August someone else had stretched a cable across the gorge, a longer and more perilous one, closer to the falls. This new man was just 22 years old and had been a professional rope walker for less than a year. He called himself Signor Farini. No one had heard of him and most expected him to fall.

Sixty-nine years later, when G. A. Farini died of the flu in a small Canadian town, a life story as spectacular as one can imagine came to an end. His duel with Blondin was just one of many pages.

His mother came from an old Canadian family that had fled the rich farm lands of southern Vermont at the time of the American Revolution and settled in the Ontario wilderness at a point about midway along the northern shore of Lake Ontario. In the early 1830s she met an English immigrant school teacher named Thomas Hunt and by 1834 they had married and moved to the Lockport, New York area, in search of financial opportunities. Here, near the locks of the Erie Canal, just 20 miles from Niagara, Thomas set up a grocery store and started raising a family. The couple already had one daughter and would eventually raise nine children.

On June 10, 1838 Hannah Hunt gave birth to her first son, William Leonard. By the time Willie was about three years old

his father had decided to close his store and move back to Canada where he purchased a 100-acre tract of land north of Port Hope, near his wife's wealthy family. Willie attended a one room school house and had to walk through what he later called "the primeval forest" to get there. Right from his earliest days he was rambunctious and difficult to handle; his energy seemed boundless and his love of adventure, preferably of the

mischievous kind, had him in nearly permanent disgrace. His father was a strict governor, fond of punishment, and dedicated to moulding his children into the cast of respectable Protestants. The highly moral father and his inordinately bright and tireless son seldom saw eye to eye.

About 1845 the family moved westward 20 miles to the village of Bowmanville where Thomas re-entered business, this time with a general store on the main street. It was here that Willie first saw a circus. He was immediately and forever captivated. At that time the area was often visited by the travelling shows from the north-eastern United States. In them Willie found an outlet for his energy and imagination. Such bright colors and panache on the dirt roads of his little town were almost more than he could bear. He usually discovered a way to get into each show despite his father's intense

This drawing of Farini crossing Niagara Falls on a tightrope with a man on his back appeared in the *London Illustrated News* October 6, 1860. Author's collection.



Signor Farini circa 1864. Archives of Ontario, Toronto, Ontario, Canada

disapproval of the circus and dictums against attendance or even casual contact with show business people. The circus, and especially the wire walkers, trapeze artistes and strongmen, became his fixation. He was blessed with athletic ability and used this and a dogged determination to learn and then perfect the moves of his favorite performers, practicing almost daily in a stable near his parents' house. In the 1840s and early 1850s showmen like Levi J. North, P. T. Barnum and Joe Pentland, who Willie claims to have met, all came to the Bowmanville area.

At the age of 12, Willie presented his first circus: a rag-tag show that featured himself on the trapeze, and his brother and several friends in a variety of acts. Though he actually made money this first time out, the second performance met with disaster when angry parents, many blaming Willie Hunt (fingered by more than a few parents as the town's bad boy) for this "immoral" exhibition, closed the show in a hail of shouts and whippings.

Three years later the town council, with Thomas Hunt as mayor, banned all unlicensed circuses.

His parents tried to curb his excesses by apprenticing him to a local doctor and for a while this seemed to work. Willie, or Bill as he now called himself, had always been an above average student and learned his new profession quickly.

Within a year of the beginning of his studies the family moved back to the Port Hope area, still in the country but on a better farm that was closer to town. The Hunts felt that their eldest son was now permanently out of trouble and didn't mind the rope which he strung from the ground to the roof of the barn, or his trips into town to see the circuses, as long as his medical education progressed smoothly.

His ability on his rope was amazing. He seemed gifted with a facility for balancing from the moment he stepped up the incline. His friends tried, but often fell, hurt themselves, and gave up, while Bill kept adding stunts: standing on his head, sitting on a chair, hanging by a foot etc. Falls didn't discourage him, and soon small crowds came to watch. He gained a local reputation as a strangely talented amateur wire walker.

In the summer of 1859, just weeks away from his graduation, two things happened that allowed his life to be changed forever. First, Blondin appeared at Niagara Falls, thrilled enormous crowds with his performances, and started a rope walking mania amongst young men in Canada and the United States. Secondly, Thomas Hunt went to England for an extended visit.

When opportunity came knocking in early September, Bill was ready. The committee responsible for the county agricultural fair in Port Hope wanted to draw a large crowd to their festivities that year and their secretary, who was also editor of the local paper, proposed that they pay Bill Hunt to make a high wire crossing over the rocky stream in the centre of town. Bill, emboldened by the absence of his father, accepted immediately. And so, on October 1, 1859, Signor Farini made his appearance.

There is no account of the origin of his stage name, either by word of mouth or on paper. However, it seems likely that he found it in the newspapers, during the weeks preceding his debut. A Signor Farini, renowned as a court physician, a politician and an heroic soldier, surfaced briefly in the journals in southern Ontario in late September. As one of the romantic leaders of Italy's independence movement, he became the dictator of Modena and staunchly defended it, at least in word, from all enemies. Within a month or two he had essentially disappeared from world history (though his career would have a few more minor footnotes). The first Farini's name was Luigi Carlo, while Bill Hunt would eventually take the name Guillermo Antonio.

Apparently unafraid to the point of

recklessness, the new Signor Farini issued a challenge to Blondin two weeks before he had even set a single foot on a high wire in public. The Port Hope and Toronto newspapers published his boast, headlined as it was by the shout, "TO M. BLONDIN!" In it he offered to go out over the Niagara with Blondin on his back, perform a dismount at centre-wire, and then switch positions for the trip home.

SIG. FARINI
THE INEXHAUSTIBLE!
FARINI THE COMICAL
SIGNOR FARINI WILL ON
ON WEDNESDAY,
SEPT. 5, 1860, AT 4 O'CLOCK, P. M.
AT
NIAGARA FALLS,
BIDDY O'FLAHERTY
THE IRISH WASHERWOMAN.
PATENT WASHING MACHINE!
Draw up Water from the River AND DO HIS OWN WASHING
FARINI'S CABLE IS WITHIN A FEW RODS OF THE FALLS
AND CLOSE TO THE FRONT.
TICKETS OF ADMISSION, . . . 25 CENTS.
Reserved Seats, Twenty-Five Cents Extra.
FRANK SUPER, Agent.

Broadside for Farini's "washing machine" high wire act on September 5, 1860. Buffalo and Erie County Historical Society.

He concluded, "I offer this challenge in consequence of M. Blondin's repeated assertions that no man dare perform his feats." It was a typical Farini statement: well composed, full of pride, and arguing that the common man could do what the gifted did. Blondin never responded.

His rope came from the rigging of a cousin's schooner, he raised it with his friends and his costume was homemade. His walkway stretched parallel to the town bridge, and went from the fourth floor of one building and into the trap door on the roof of another. It was about two hundred feet long and sixty feet high. It sagged so terribly in the middle that one wondered if its engineer could really know what he was doing. But at four o'clock on the appointed day he made his appearance on the top of one building be-

fore a disarmingly large crowd that went for long distances along the main street, and started his performance with the confidence of a seasoned professional.

He walked out over the water at a slow but steady pace and would have had no difficulties whatsoever were it not for a slight pause when the poorly adjusted rope suddenly slipped, with him at mid-point. On his return he discarded his pole, a daring move for a novice, and went out to the centre where he jumped off and caught the rope with one arm, sat down for a while with his arms held out, and finally hung by his feet with his hands stretched down toward the water. When he had finished the cheering rang up and down the streets.

The second part of his contract with the Agricultural Society stipulated that he perform a strongman routine at the town hall. This took place six days later. Employing the extraordinary strength he had built up through self-disciplined training with weights from his father's barn scales, and the tricks he had seen at the circus and mastered through his own ingenuity, he gave the crowd a convincing show. He started with a lecture on the subject of "Physical Culture," using his medical knowledge to explain his theories. Then he had a huge stone placed on his chest and had volunteers smash it with sledge hammers. Next he did his rope-pull, where a dozen men or more combined on one end of a tug-of-war while he alone manned the other side. Finally he exhibited feats of strength with weights, including a one-handed lift of over 150 pounds. It was later reported that in the subsequent year he dead-lifted 1,000 pounds, making him temporarily one of the world's strongest men.

His second Port Hope walk took place on the last day of the fair, October 11. The crowd that turned out for this performance has gone down in the history of the town: numbering 8,000, it was the largest ever gathered there (and may hold the record to this day), and almost twice Port Hope's entire population. This time Farini appeared on the roof with a man on his back, who was strapped on with a harness and ready to be carried across the rope. The mayor, apparently frightened that a disaster was about to unfold before his very eyes, intervened and put a stop to the first act. Farini then went out and stood on his head, did some somersaults and walked blindfolded.

Farini claimed that within a few weeks of this last performance he passed his final exams and became a doctor. This is still open to some debate. That same

month his father returned from England, and immediately made it known that he was angered and embarrassed by his son's "mountebank" performances. Farini broke with his father over the issue and left home to pursue a showman's career.

After performing at several small fairs in Canada that year, he left the country and went to live on the American frontier, in Minnesota, with an uncle's family. But soon he was off again, enlisting in Dan Rice's floating circus that was making stops along the Mississippi River all the way from Wisconsin to New Orleans. He claims to have worked as everything from an advance man to the feature wire walker.

In the spring of 1860 he returned to Canada and continued performing. By July he was back in his home town of Bowmanville doing his strongman routine and walking over the main street, but his mind was set on the ominous gorge at Niagara Falls and the only man who had ever conquered it.

Within a few weeks he appeared at the Falls, and offered another public challenge, but Blondin ignored him again. The great French artiste had seen several pretenders come and go. Each had offered to try his famous walk, but so far, none had shown the courage to actually do it. This newcomer was an untried nobody, 14 years his junior. But Farini was not to be denied.

By late July he had convinced several Niagara hotel owners to sponsor him and within a few weeks had succeeded in the daunting task of getting a cable over the gorge. Blondin's first rope had been at a point about a mile below the Falls where the gorge narrowed somewhat, but now he had moved more than another mile downstream, to a 500-foot rope strung over the whirlpool at Devil's Hole. Farini's cable would be the longest yet, measuring about 1,800 feet. It was also situated closer to the Falls than either of Blondin's, at a widening in the gorge several hundred feet south of the first rope.

Their rivalry became an immediate sensation and over 10,000 people came to their first dual performance.

Many spectators initially considered Farini to be something of a farce, either a ruse set up to draw tourists, an amateur who would fail through lack of skill or courage, or a fool about to lose his life. His debut on August 15 nearly proved them correct when he seemed terribly nervous at the outset and then en-

countered problems when his long balance pole became entangled in his guy wires. But he rallied from these difficulties and put on a respectable show that included a headstand, gymnastics and a daring descent from the cable, via a vertical rope, to the deck of the steamboat



Farini, age 22, at Niagara Falls September 5, 1860 performing as Biddy O'Flaherty. Local History Department, Niagara Falls, New York Public Library.

the *Maid of the Mist*, followed by a strenuous ascent back up to the cable which nearly cost him his life. Blondin's show, commencing an hour later than originally intended so it wouldn't start at the same time as Farini's, was highlighted by the moment when he cooked an omelette on his stove at mid-wire, and was typically flawless. But Farini actually had a larger crowd than his veteran opponent and while most reporters thought Blondin the superior walker, Farini was unquestionably thrilling to watch and was admired for what was considered a promising first outing. It was often noted that Farini's huge rope was not nearly as well strung as Blondin's. Its ragged, drooping appearance scared people. It was rumored that Blondin had said he would never set a single foot upon it, and when spectators saw it sway in the wind with Farini fighting to stay aloft, they tended to believe the rumor.

Two days later the two men walked again. Farini, trying to poke fun at the seriousness of it all, dressed up in the character of "Mickey Free, the Irish Pedestrian" (a well known long-distance runner of the day) and walked over his cable in an incredible time of nine minutes. He also performed using gymnast's rings. Blondin walked in wooden shoes, and nearly had a problem when their

smooth-bottomed soles caused him to slide along the rope—he was forced to take them off and walk shoeless. Farini's stature seemed to be growing.

He presented his strongman act at a Niagara Falls, New York theatre a few days later and then ascended his rope again on the 22nd for the only performance of the season that was not scheduled simultaneous with Blondin. Most of his acts were designed to mimic his famous rival, and show the public that Blondin's skills were neither unearthly nor unique. He knew that the Frenchman had walked with his body enclosed in a sack, with only his feet protruding. Farini, as the people's iconoclast, went one further. Out he went that day, his *entire* body encased in a sack. Almost from the moment he stepped from the platform he knew he was in trouble—he had no trac-

tion and began slipping down the rope's decline, perilously close to falling. He had to stop, slowly ease back up the cable, unbag himself, put his shoes on outside the sack, and then re-start. Part way out he stood on his head, and with the wind snapping the cambric sack he looked like a human sail, spread to the Niagara's winds. On his return trip he walked backward, as promised.

Perhaps the highlight of their famous season came on August 29th when they both carried men on their backs. Blondin, who had performed the feat the previous year, was of course flawless again, hoisting up his little manager, Harry Colcord, and walking without pause to the other shore. Farini tried to "one-up" him again, a bold decision that nearly proved fatal. His load was an old friend from Port Hope named Rowland McMullen (billed as a stranger) who was much taller and heavier than Colcord. Farini was supposed to unload at mid-wire, turn around, reload, and return. He found the trip heavy-going right from the beginning and had to unload McMullen several times before he even got to the centre. When he got there he crossed, hand over hand, beneath his companion, and then took him home. He was criticized somewhat for this show but the sight of him with this huge weight on his back, knees nearly buckling, and the novice McMullen walking behind him at various times, hands glued to his shoulders, surely left indelible marks on the memories of his spectators.



Signor Farini, 1864, at the time of his stilt walk along the brink of Niagara Falls. Archives of Ontario, Toronto.

During the remaining weeks of September Farini gave several more shows. On the 5th he walked in the comic character of "Biddy O'Flaherty, the Irish Washerwoman," who carried a 100-pound washing machine on "her" back (to parody Blondin), washed the handkerchiefs of several ladies at mid-wire, and put them out to dry in the wind. Anyone who doubted that the handkerchiefs had been cleaned was invited to come out to mid-cable to examine them. He also walked while pantomiming a horse, jumped from his rope into the water and ascended at night in the glow of roman candles which subsequently went out, leaving him to negotiate his walk in total darkness.

When he took down his cable at month's end and moved on to an engagement in Springfield, Ohio, he did so with a sense of vindication. Though it was evident that Blondin was a more accomplished wire walker, and the Prince of Wales had snubbed him during his Niagara visit in favor of the veteran, Farini had proven himself courageous and imaginative. He had shown people what disciplined self-training could do, and kept pace in a race that most thought he couldn't even run.

Though Blondin had gone to Europe, Farini returned to the Falls in 1861. But he was unable to get proper business arrangements settled to make his walks profitable, something he always insisted on, and instead put on a series of exhibitions in neighboring Buffalo. Here he defeated Monsieur DeLave, who had been threatening to take on Blondin for several

years but never following through, in a series of publicly judged high wire performances.

Later that year he married, and then sought adventure in the American Civil War as a member of an Engineers' Regiment in the Federal Army. He had begun applying his imagination to the art of invention and claimed to have created a new kind of rope bridge for the army, one that could be employed very quickly, and a pair of pontoon-like shoes that would enable soldiers to walk on water. He is said to have met President Lincoln while exhibiting the shoes and often quoted Old Abe's advice to him concerning a possible mishap: "Young man, don't be afraid, for if you should tip over and get in head down, I'm tall enough to wade you out."

Farini also claimed to have done some spying for the North and there is some evidence that he once suffered a somewhat serious leg wound. He eventually attained the rank of Captain.

By December of 1862 he had either left the service or taken time off for show business because on the 6th of that month he was in Havana, Cuba at the Piazza Torres Bull Ring in a performance that featured him carrying Madame Farini on his back. But on that day tragedy struck. As they were finishing the act, coming within a few steps of the platform, his wife made the terrible error of reaching back to wave to the crowd. She slipped and fell. In order to save her, he allowed himself to fall after her, hooked his leg around the rope, and reached down to grab her dress with one hand. But the material was too light, it tore away in his fingers, and she fell head-first into the seats below. Within a few days she was dead.

Despite his terrible loss, he continued performing in North America for the next few years. In later years he said he travelled throughout South America during these days and for a while ran the first three-ring circus before Barnum. When he appeared at the Hippodrome in New York City in the summer of 1864 he called himself "The Athlete of the World," and combining his strength, wire-walking and trapeze acts. His literate mind, comic sense and eye for publicity once caused him to inform the public that he was not an acrobat, but a "pangymnastikonaerostationist."

In August of 1864 he returned to Niagara Falls and attempted the bizarre feat of wading through the rapids on the very brink of the American Falls on steel stilts. The public was doubtful that he would try it and assumed the feat was impossible. There was a fictional story of someone once accomplishing it and legends about natives doing it in earlier centuries. On the 9th he started out from

shore and headed toward Goat Island. Either due to the goading of the crowd or his own recklessness, he inched closer and closer to the brink as he moved across. When he was nearly three-quarters of the way to his destination, a stilt became jammed in a crevice, and while attempting to dislodge it he was thrown from his perch and was suddenly in the rapids being swept toward the edge. Just as he was about to go over the falls he reached out in desperation for the branch of a tree on a small island and caught it. He hauled himself onto shore and there he remained, battered and bruised, while rescuers scratched their heads trying to figure out how to get to him. It wasn't until a full day later that his brother Tom was able to get a cord to him and pull him to Goat Island and safety. The *New York Times* went to print with an article about his predicament while he was still sitting on his dot in the rapids. He always claimed that this accident occurred during what was essentially a practice session and that he had actually not yet decided if he would present it to the public.

A few weeks later he walked over Chaudiere Falls in Ottawa, a feat some considered more difficult than the Niagara ascension. His rope, strung within view of the construction site of Canada's first permanent Parliament buildings, needed to be enormously long and was above a cataract that would almost certainly have killed him had he fallen in.

A newspaper report claimed that he

Lulu in his/her prime in London in the early 1870s. Henry Thetard collection.



married a Nova Scotian millionairess late in 1864 after she saw him perform in Halifax. If this is true then she somehow disappears from his life within the following seven years, because in 1871 he married again. His third wife was an English woman named Alice Carpenter who gave him what were apparently his only children, two sons.

After another year of North American touring he decided to sail to England and seek fame in Europe. Always searching for that imaginative edge, he adopted an orphaned child, possibly off the streets, dubbed him "El Nino," and trained him for his act. They hit the Cremorne Gardens and the beautiful Alhambra Palace in London in 1866 as the Flying Farinis.

It was a unique act, with the nimble son on the flying trapeze bounding through the air, sometimes using his father's rock-hard abdominal area as a kind of trampoline, other times playing a snare drum as his father held him by the nape of the neck, and finishing each outing with a rendition of *Wait Till I'm a Man*. Over the next few years they did well, both in England and on the continent. Farini noticed two impressive components to the act: firstly, the possibilities of trapezining or projecting in a trapeze performance and secondly, the way in which the press and the audiences responded to the beauty of his adopted son. With these two things very much in mind, he disappeared from public view for about a year at the end of the decade.

In July of 1870 Signor Farini presented "Mademoiselle Lulu," the Circassian beauty, in what was probably her debut at Dejean's in Paris. In January of 1871 she opened at the Cremorne in London, the following month she performed before British royalty, and by March had been drawn and eulogized in *Punch*, and featured in many other journals. Her principal act was the sensational "Lulu Leap" which saw her jump twenty-five feet straight up into the air from solid stage boards to her trapeze bar. Though some thought her possessed of supernatural powers, this actually was the result of a Farini invention. He had built an elasticized catapult mechanism that could fit into any stage—it snapped up and down, faster than the human eye. It was suggested by British circus historian George Speaight that Farini's Lulu act also featured the first use of a safety net. Lulu is sometimes credited with the world's first triple somersault, into a net.

Lulu became a star. Her act was called "the principal sensational performance in London." Her picture and other items featuring her name became popular. She was

renowned for her beauty, and several men, some of high standing, offered gifts and even marriage. But Lulu seemed to be a retiring kind of person who stayed indoors and never met the public while off stage. Soon rumors, many fuelled from within the business (Blondin is said to have been one source) circulated that Lulu was actually a young man. Though Farini denied the accusations, he seemed to encourage the speculation.



Lulu, Signor Farini and an unidentified performer, possibly one of the Zazels, in the mid 1870s. Mrs. G. Marsh and the East Durham Historical Society, Port Hope, Ontario.

Lulu enjoyed a great run of success throughout the 1870s. She appeared on several continents including North America where she was a good draw at Niblo's Garden in New York City. Many imitators of both her name and her act appeared, including a young German girl name Rossa Matilda Richter who was called "the Petite Lulu" at first but would later go on to fame under Farini's tutelage as "Zazel." By the mid 1870s many were sure that Lulu was a man, but it seems that it wasn't until early 1877, a few months after "she" suffered an injury during a performance at Hengler's Cirque in Dublin (and was examined by a doctor), that Farini admitted publicly to the deception: Lulu was his adopted son El Nino. This revelation caused a good deal of embarrassment to the many men, both

aristocratic and common, who had expressed love for the performer that the *Penny Illustrated Paper* had once described as "a beauteous little blonde."

Despite his unmasking, Lulu continued to command a high salary and top billing wherever he went. In 1881 Farini had him on W. C. Coup's show at Madison Square Garden, and he continued the season with that show as its top-billed act. The following year Lulu was with Barnum & London, featured in a catapult act and the high-jump to the top of the center pole.

Some time around 1875 Farini may have made his debut as an author. He is credited with a scientifically thorough book entitled *Ferns Which Grow in New Zealand*. Three more books followed.

The Royal Westminster Aquarium, which opened across the street from the Abbey in 1876, was originally intended to be an institute of culture, catering to a high-brow clientele and exhibiting scientific marvels, a well-stocked library and intellectual happenings. But when it immediately ran into financial difficulties its proprietors desperately turned to G. A. Farini. Within a short time Farini was filling its cavernous hall with people from all walks of life (including members of Parliament) who came to see things of a spectacular if not intellectual nature. His first show started with a bang, literally.

In April of 1877 he presented what many believed was the world's first human cannonball act, firing the beautiful young Zazel across the Aquarium hall and into a net. He employed the same spring mechanism he had used in the Lulu act, with a generous addition of gun powder for the requisite concussion. The first recorded use of the human cannonball act appears to have been on the Yankee Robinson show in the summer of 1875 in a trick called "The Great Sepoy Gun Feat," but somehow this seems to have quickly faded from the scene, possibly because it had not been perfected and therefore did not have sufficient effect on its audience. Farini, who it must be noted, actually patented the act late in 1875, had no problems pleasing his audience and making his moment a show-stopper. His performance of it was undoubtedly the beginning of its ascendancy in the circus, and London was stirred from the moment it hit town.

Zazel became the second Farini protege to become a star. After touring England and the continent she received top billing on Barnum's show in 1880 and 1882, and was the attraction of the Cooper, Jackson

and Co. show of the following year. She was the subject of a popular farce called "Little Dr. Faust" starring Nellie Farren at the Gaiety Theatre in London, a play that had 151 performances and also showed a Farini-like character (the dark Mephistopheles) lighting the cannon. A song about her was popularized by George Leybourne. Zazel is said to have retired after hurting her back in a fall. She later married George O. Starr, a Barnum show executive, and is the subject of W. Somerset Maugham's short story, "Gigolo and Gigolette."

As the 1880s approached Farini, who had grown his pointed imperial black moustache and goatee into a long, flowing one, slowly built a reputation as a brilliant, shadowy character; the dark power behind the scenes of much of the off-beat entertainment in London. He was seen as an ingenious and mysterious manipulator of people. It was rumoured that he had at least four Zazels, and would employ one if another balked at entering the cannon. He began acquiring a multitude of acts and seemed to be able to get them to do difficult and dangerous things for the public. He presented the following shows for the Aquarium: the Man with the Iron Skull, the hypnotised horse, the boxing kangaroo, the talking walrus, a live whale (which died), the Laplanders, Zulu tribesmen, Zaeo, Samson, the 100 Foot Dive, a sword swallower, a snake charmer, African Pygmies, broncho horses, and his famous freak, Krao, the Missing Link. It was said many years later that Farini had been the model used by George du Maurier when he created the evil and manipulative character, Svengali, a man with a long, black beard.

Farini separated from his third wife in 1878 and was divorced two years later in legal proceedings that were featured prominently in the press.

In 1880 the Parliament of Great Britain attempted to pass the "Dangerous Performances Act." It was aimed at stopping risk-filled show-business acts, especially those that involved "mechanical projecting power." Farini and his band of performers were obviously a primary target. Though the Aquarium had never had a serious accident, all controversial acts were soon banned. Farini then sold the patents for the acts and became more of a freak show promoter or curiosities showman. In the United States he took out an ad in the April 8th issue of the New York *Clipper* advising that the Lulu and Zazel acts,

This 1882 Barnum & London lithographed featured Zazel. Pfening Archives.

as well as Bebe, the Flying Woman, had been purchased from him (the first two were sold to Barnum, Bailey and Hutchinson, and the latter to Coup). The ad was headlined "Caution to Managers" and was signed "G. A. Farini, Patentee and Proprietor of Lulu, Zazel, Bebe, Zeo, Zulus and Elastic Skin-man."

It is interesting to note Farini's impact on the 1882 Barnum and London Combined Show that toured the north-eastern United States. It opened at Madison Square Garden for a long run in March and closed October 14 in Chester, Pennsylvania, after a hugely successful season. The show featured "Zazel, the Woman Cannonball" on the high wire, in a "head-long Straight Down Dive" from the top of the pavilion, and in the inevitable cannon

The 1882 Barnum & London lithograph of Lulu included his picture. Pfening Archives.

feat. Then there was "LuLu, the Incomparable" in the leap from the ground to the top of the canvas, in a trapeze act, and a catapult act where he was thrown 200 feet through the air, somersaulting as he flew. There was also "Zeo, the Supreme Sensation Queen" who slid down a rope by the hair on her head, Farini's Zulus and a Roman Hippodrome which may or may not have had some Farini connection. And lastly Farini himself was listed in the route book as a "ring lecturer."

Krao, the Missing Link, is said to have been found in the jungles of Laos by an explorer for Farini. She was advertised as having prehensile feet, pouches, hair over most of her body and other simian characteristics. When she was first exhibited at the Aquarium in 1882 she caused quite a stir amongst paying customers and anger from some scientists. Farini wrote his second book, about her, proposing only slightly tongue-in-cheek, that she was the missing link in Darwin's theory. She was exhibited for royalty in her youth, but must have been well treated by Farini because she was presented later in life as a well-educated lady capable of speaking several languages, a skill that Farini also possessed. She was on the John B. Doris show in the United States in 1885, and by 1917 was a fixture and principal attraction on the Ringling Brothers side show. She seems to have prospered in life and always called herself Krao Farini.

It should be mentioned that Farini was also involved in the management of Captain Costentenus, the world's most tattooed man, one of the late 19th century's most famous freaks.

By 1884 Farini had presented several African exhibitions and had sent his assistant W. A. Healey to Africa to bring back Bushmen and Zulu tribesmen. He had shown them at the Aquarium, on Barnum's show and at Coney Island. In 1885 he decided to do some exploring of his own and enlisted Lulu (who had married Farini's much younger sister Edith Hunt) to go with him. Many different reasons were given for the trip: a search for diamonds, more exhibits, exploration or an interest in buying land, but the primary purpose was probably adventure. They left England in January and returned in August. Their trip took them from Cape Town in what is now South Africa and up through



Krao, the missing link, as a child was pictured in the 1885 John B. Doris Circus herald. Pfening Archives.

the Kalahari Desert to Lake N'Gami in present-day Botswana. They went into areas where few Western people had been, travelling by wagon with a single guide and a few natives and armed with only the firearms they brought with them. Farini brought back several more Earthmen for exhibition and flora which he donated to the Royal Botanical Gardens at Kew, London.

He kept a diary of their adventures and insisted that Lulu, who was training himself in photography, record the Kalahari on film. In November of 1885 he delivered an address (in German) to the Berlin Geographical Society on the Kalahari and by early the next year had published his third book, *Through the Kalahari Desert* with drawings from Lulu's photographs, who now retired entirely from show business and opened the "Farini Photographs" studio in Bridgeport, Connecticut. The book was excerpted in *The Graphic* in England and reviewed extensively, including a long piece in the *New York Tribune*. It was translated into both German and French. Perhaps its most controversial section dealt with his claim that he thought he had discovered ancient ruins, deep in the Kalahari Desert. The "ruins" were a collection of large and oddly shaped rocks, aligned in a curious pattern, somewhat like

Stonehenge. Controversy concerning the authenticity of his claim has raged well into the 20th century and prompted many expeditions, none of which have discovered anything similar to the "ruins" Farini described. A great many of the details of his trip have come under question in the past 100 years, though there is no doubt that he went to southern African and did most of what he claimed. The legend of "the lost city of the Kalahari" is prominent in South African lore and Farini is given several paragraphs in the South African Encyclopedia.

In January of 1886 he married Anna Muller, an aristocratic German who was the daughter of the Kaiser's aide-de-camp, a former student of Franz Liszt and a relative of Richard Wagner. She was 15 years younger than the 47-year-old Farini but had already gained some fame as a concert pianist.

Farini became a partner in the highly successful Richard Warner theatrical agency after he returned from Africa. They were probably England's most powerful show-business agents and represented the country's biggest stars including Lily Langtry, Eugene Sandow, Fred Karnow and Vesta Tilley. One of Farini's Warner promotions was the parachute jumps by the American, Professor Baldwin, which took place at Alexandra Palace during the summer of 1888. The Prince and Princess of Wales came, along

with crowds of sometimes more than 60,000 to see Baldwin ascend to a great height in a hot air balloon and then leap out with nothing but the relatively newly discovered parachute to save him. It was considered a death-defying act and was very nearly prevented by British courts.

The Farinis moved south of London to the upper class suburb of Forest Hill in the 1890s and rented a mansion with extensive grounds. Here he semi-retired from show business and began working on his inventions and a growing interest in botany. He planted 60,000 begonias in 1895 and two years later published his fourth book, *How to Grow Begonias*, a kind of large handbook, complete with a number of flowers that he had named after himself. He was subsequently made a Fellow of the Royal Horticultural Society.

Among his inventions was a method for increasing power in steam engines, a system for boxing bottles, improvements in gun cartridges, a new telegraph apparatus, an efficient watering can, and the principle of the sliding theatre chair, something well known to 20th century movie-goers. His intelligence had always been a strength for him. He was once called "the most astute trainer of acrobats in the world," and he is said to have been passably fluent in seven languages. The legendary British impresario John Hollingshead once wrote at some length about his cleverness. In his spare time he wrote poetry and short stories, and even penned the lyrics for a song that Anna

This illustration of "dangerous performances" appeared in the March 13, 1880 *Penny Illustrated Paper*.



wrote which was published by a reputable English music publisher.

In 1894 he organized an enormous "Fete of the Season" in London as a fund-raiser for the British Home for the Incurables, a huge social occasion that was patronized by the Prince and Princess and brought out some of England's more famous stars, including Mrs. Langtry. This desire to help the needy may have been spurred by the death the previous year of his youngest son, Henry Ernest, who had been studying medicine. He was left with just one son, William Leonard.

By 1899 he had left England for good and returned to Canada where he took up residence in Toronto. Anna taught music and Farini took on a number of things, including investing huge sums of money in the stock market, becoming vice-president of a gold-mining company, manager of a whip company and an engineer, but his biggest love had become painting.

He studied art for the last three decades of his life, starting about 1900 in the Toronto classes of F. McGillivray Knowles. Soon he had a studio on Toronto's busy Yonge Street and was exhibiting with young artists who would later become some of Canada's masters: G. A. Reid, C. W. Jeffreys and J. E. H. MacDonald. He began making some money from his art and listed himself as an artist in the city directory.

During his time in Toronto he became involved in the invention of what he considered to be an unsinkable boat. It was known as Knapp's Roller Boat and was a huge steel structure of cylindrical shape, unlike any boat that had ever been built. It had two shells, an inner one which always remained stationary and an outer which moved with the waves. Its passengers were to never notice the roll of the waves, regardless of the weather, and never be sea sick. It was powered by four steam engines. He sunk \$75,000 into the boat, which regrettably, soon sunk itself.

In 1910 the Farinis went to live in Germany, close to Anna's family, where Farini continued to study art. He also experimented with sculpture and one of his larger pieces was offered to Canada for exhibition at the 1913 San Francisco World's Fair. When the war broke out they were not allowed to leave and while it seems that he was not actually interned, he was asked to report to the authorities on stipulated dates. During the war he wrote an account of its battles from the

COLUMBUS, Saturday, May 21st, '81.

W. C. COUP'S COLOSSAL SHOW.

FIVE TIMES LARGER THAN EVER!
ONETHOUSANDOVERWHELMING NEW FEATURES
Positively Seen in No Other Show on Earth.



FARINI'S GREAT PARIS HIPPODROME,

With a Magnificent Four-Horse Roman Chariot Race Track, 40 feet wide, nearly half-a-mile round, containing nearly 200 Chariots, Horses and Hippodrome Features, and requiring for this special department **50 DISTINGUISHED RIDERS OF ALL NATIONS** 50
REQUIRING THE USE OF
Four Great Circus Rings and the Employment of Three Great Circus Companies,

Composed of nearly Two Hundred Male and Female Performers. The first and only show in the world that ever used **NINE KINDS OF MUSIC**, including four grand Bands, Power Musical Orchestras, and the **MALPINGTONIAN CHARIOT OF MCKENNY & CO.**, whose thundering symphonies are fully equal to the combined melodies of 1,200 SKILLFUL MUSICIANS.

LARGEST SHOW TENT in the WORLD.

Larger than 12 Shows combined, in which will be witnessed Hippodrome Races, Chariot Races, Roman Races, Jockey Races, Flat Races, Starling races, steeple and Hurdle Races. The first and only Hippodrome in the world that was ever exhibited in connection with a first-class Museum. Three Great Circus Companies and a Manager of nearly a thousand trained horses and wild animals. The Great Hippodrome tent alone requires 250 laborers and horses to raise it.

A fine stilette of the **FAMOUS NEW YORK OBELISK**, Egypt's gift to the New World, a genuine contemporary with Moses, recently set up in Central Park, at a cost of over \$100,000, is among the numerous novel attractions, also the beautiful and wonderfully trained.

\$100,000 STUD OF BRONCHO HORSES.

A MECHANICAL DRUM MAJOR CORPS, consisting of 12 life-sized automatons, mounted on a beautiful Tableau Chariot, each beating in perfect time upon 12 silver-mounted Brass Drums, also the famous mechanical re-production of Braumigen's Band, Golden Chariots of Automatie Singing Birds, Okouwe's Indian show, with wire, Japanese, poles and wireman tents, a whole tribe. A Troupe of Male and Female Zulu Warriors, Japanese, Egyptian Mamelukes, and Patented Arabs, beautiful Lilliputian Midget Queens, Coney's Prince, Daughter and Suite, and many other rare and beautiful things.

If there are any one, two or three shows in America combined, that can present briefly such an array of stupendous facts, or can show one-tenth part of the U. and Novel and sensational attractions of **W. C. COUP'S COMBINED SHOWS**

W. C. Coup's circus listed Farini's Great Paris Hippodrome in the title and pictured Lulu in 1881 newspaper advertisements. John Polacsek collection

German perspective, translating many articles from their newspapers. The account stretched into more than 30 volumes and remains unpublished to this day.

When the Farinis were allowed to return to Canada in 1920 they had lost much of their wealth and Farini was past his 80th birthday. He had sold most of the 700 acres of land around Port Hope that he had purchased over the years and lived with relatives not far from his parent's old homestead until a house was purchased in Port Hope. He is said to

have been exercising each morning past his 90th birthday and walking homemade tightropes for fun. He spent the last years of his life painting, and taking five-mile bicycle trips out to work on farms that now belonged to old friends and relatives. One of his paintings, a large nude entitled "Waiting in the Harem," received an award at the 1923 Canadian National Exhibition. He is remembered as a kind, but eccentric, old gentleman who dressed impeccably and possessed impressive, old-world manners. But many in the small town left him to himself, thinking him too unusual, and even mysterious.

He was interviewed several times by local papers but for the most part his bizarre life story was unknown to the people around him. Those who got to know him were entertained in an elegant home jammed wall-to-wall with paintings, sculptures, African and circus mementoes, and valuable German china and antiques. Visitors were also often regaled with strange stories that seemed almost other-worldly, about Victorian freak shows and the circus' early thrill acts, with young women and transvestites flying out of cannons, leaping twenty-five feet straight up from solid ground or sailing skyward from a huge catapult.

G. A. Farini lived into his 91st year and was in such superb physical condition that friends were actually shocked when they heard of his death on January 17, 1929.

Obituaries appeared in the New York Times and in several other prominent papers, often filled with inaccuracies: he had been long-forgotten. He left a modest sum of money to his wife and one son, who was living in England. Anna died two years later and in 1945 their spectacular possessions were auctioned off at a sale in Port Hope.

A great-nephew remembers going to see him during his bout with the flu in January of 1929. The little boy shyly entered the room and looked up at the legendary figure before him in the bed. He asked his Great Uncle if he was going to die. Farini replied that this was nonsense; a fortune-teller had been to see him just that day, and she had told him he would live for 20 more years.

The next day he was dead.

The author would like to thank Dr. Gordon Brown, whose extensive and well researched Farini files were kindly made available.

This is the third paper in the series concerned with W. C. Coup and P.T. Barnum's circus partnership. The first, "Prelude to Barnum: The Coup and Castello Circus of 1870," appeared in the July-August, 1971, Bandwagon. The second, "P.T. Barnum's Great Travelling Museum, Menagerie, Caravan and Hippodrome," was printed in the July-August, 1976 issue.

At the close of the 1871 summer season, the Barnum circus went into the Empire Rink Building at Third Avenue and Sixty Third Street in New York for a winter's run. This was on November 13; the stand ended on January 6. At that time, according to the Chindahl files, Barnum was willing to move the circus to Racine, Wisconsin if sufficient land could be purchased for a winter quarters. Dan Castello, minor partner in the firm, was a resident of Racine and presumably suggested such an arrangement. He located twelve acres west of the Chicago & Northwestern tracks at Doud Street, which were available for \$12,000. However, he apparently reckoned without Mrs. Castello, who liked her home and didn't want to move. Someone else then purchased the Doud Street property. Later, Castello found another parcel near 12th and Main Streets, but his wife still refused to move. Why it was necessary that Castello live at the quarters is not answered in the reference. Perhaps his plan was to purchase the land and lease it to the show and he needed to sell his house in order to accomplish this. By that much did Racine, Wisconsin miss becoming possibly the circus center that Bridgeport eventually became. Barnum's interest in Bridgeport and its proximity to New York would likely have led to the situation we know, however, Mrs. Castello or no.

Eighteen-seventy-two was, of course, the year in which the Barnum circus went on rails. If one reads Barnum's autobiography, this innovation was his idea; if one reads Coup's *Sawdust and Spangles*, it was Coup's idea. Regardless, it was Coup's task to accomplish the change, and both men agree that it was done in order to avoid playing in small towns in which attendance was limited. The wagon show could only move as fast as the horses could pull it, fifteen to

P. T. Barnum's Great Traveling Exposition and World's Fair The Season of 1872

By Stuart Thayer

twenty miles a day on average. Having to show every day meant stopping at the nearest town in many of which the potential audience would not pay the overhead of the day's travelling. By using the railroad, "we could ignore the small places," Coup wrote, "and travel only from one big town to another, thereby drawing the cream of the trade from the adjacent small towns instead of trying to give an exhibition in each."¹

They were not the first to think of this, as Coup acknowledges. In 1853, Gilbert R. Spalding financed "The Railroad Circus,"

The 1872 Barnum courier read: "Seven immense shows in six colossal tents." Pfening Archives.

so we will not explicate them here.² However, it is important that the number of cars has been found to be sixty-five, divided into two trains.³ Researchers have always been fascinated, and rightly so, by the 1872 Barnum train; oddly, that interest did not exist at the time as almost nothing has been found to illustrate either the loading or unloading activities. This leads us to conclude that the operation was used by other shippers and therefore had become mundane.

The main advantage of the new system was the avoidance of small towns, as we said, and in 1872 only six towns of less than 3,000 population were played (ignoring nine places the population of which is unknown to us) out of 145 stands. Because the show had to go where the tracks went, and they wanted to perform every day, they very occasionally were forced to play a small town on their way to more populous areas. This happened, at the most, once in ten days.

In addition to the expense of leasing the railroad cars and paying the way bills, Coup had to add a train crew to the payroll. This consisted of a master of transportation, his assistant, and twenty-nine workmen. This number assuredly made a small dent in the gross, which increased two-and-a-half times over that of 1871. An Ohio newspaper commented: "It has cost as much money to fit out (Barnum's) great travelling show, as the British Government paid for its famous ex-





pedition in search of (polar explorer) Sir John Franklin."⁴

Barnum was advertised as the proprietor and Coup as the manager. Barnum had a 40% interest in the firm; Coup, Castello and Samuel H. Hurd, Barnum's son in law and show treasurer, had 20% each. Barnum had capitalized the 1871 show and held 2/3 of the ownership. He also had a 3% override, i.e., he received that percentage of the gross over and above any dividends paid. Whether that arrangement continued in 1872 is not known.

Edward Buckley, one of the many Delavan residents with the circus, had been Coup's assistant in 1871. He was replaced

The Temple of Juno was the show's big tableau wagon. Shown in the center of the Kalamazoo photo, it was later remodeled into the Neptune Chariot as which it appeared on the show through 1887. Pfening Archives.



This drawing is from a photograph of the Barnum show in Kalamazoo, Michigan, October 24, 1872. Pfening Archives.

by fellow-townsmen Luke Tilden for 1872. Buckley and his brother moved over to the more profitable privilege side of the concern, having the 1872 concert.

Tilden, rising from 1871 parade manager to be Coup's assistant, certainly improved his position. Others who moved up were S. H. Hurd from assistant treasurer to treasurer and W.C. Crum from director of publications to general agent.

Hold-overs in the same capacities as 1871 included Dr. A. C. Berry, veterinarian; Joseph Baker, boss canvasman (called "master of pavillions"); Charles White, lion trainer and menagerie superintendent; and George Coup, W. C.'s brother, at the candy privilege.

Charles C. Pell, longtime agent (we first find him in 1847), was the trainmaster; J. L. Hutchinson, future Barnum partner, was a press agent; Ben Lusbie, general ticket agent; Fritz Hartman, band leader; Stump Robinson, ring stock boss. Another recognizable name was Page Buckley, Mathew's son, who worked in the cookhouse for his brothers, Harry and Ed.

It was in 1872 that the phrase "Greatest Show on Earth," was first used by Barnum. It may have been true; comparisons are difficult. No other proprietor offered a museum as large as his; the menagerie might have been surpassed by Forepaugh's twenty-eight cages; James E. Cooper's ring presentation was at least as strong. As for street parades, no showmen

could come near the panoply offered by Howe's Great London.

In management, however, we think Coup had the edge on everyone. He took this new method, railroading, and a large show and travelled up to one hundred miles a night and, he claimed, "... visited all the cities and important towns from New York to Bangor, Maine, then west as far as Omaha and north as far as St. Paul. . . without missing a connection or losing a show."

This was an amazing effort and one that managers have used as an example ever since. However, they did not play Bangor, as Coup stated, or anywhere else in New England. Nor did they go to Omaha, Topeka, Kansas being their westernmost stop. The last stand was in Detroit on October 29 and 30. From there they returned to New York, a trip requiring ten days.

Six separate tents for one price of admission, the ads read. However, there were complaints along the way of people having to pay another fifteen cents to see the Bunnell brothers' sideshow.

This indicates some confusion concerning the number of tents. The show had ten tents on the lot, four of them presumably for horses and equipment. The five that could be seen for fifty cents were:

1 - Automaton. Wax figures that played instruments, breathed and made head motions. Birds that flew. Ships that sailed. Cars which ran. Ancient armor. A family of Fiji cannibals. A Digger Indian from the Yosemite Valley of California.

2 - Menagerie. Contained twenty of the small cross-cages of the day. The unusual specimens were a rhinoceros, a giraffe, two sea lions, and a supposed gorilla, which was most likely a chimpanzee.

3 - Led Animals. A tent-full of camels, dromedaries and two elephants.

4 - Strange People. Admiral Dot, the midget. The Albino family. The bearded child. Anna E. Leake, the girl without arms.

5 - The arena.

Three shows a day, at eleven, two and eight o'clock. was the usual order and the only time they seem to have deviated from that schedule was in Kansas City on August 14 when a railroad wreck ahead of the circus train delayed them long enough to allow only two performances.

What the public saw in the ring "surpasses anything seen in this city before," said the paper in LaCrosse, Wisconsin.⁵ Admission was fifty cents and one ticket passed a person through the whole show. Purchasers of Barnum's autobiography, usually costing \$3.50, paid \$1.50 and received a ticket as well.

The people came in droves. The one consistent observation in the newspapers was of the constant press of persons arriving to view the parade and the big show.

"Before five o'clock this morning the roll of wheels upon the streets sounded forth the potency of advertising. Within an hour the incoming carriages had increased in number until the main streets . . . were crowded as with a procession. Thousands have come by the railroad alone," said the *Akron Daily Beacon* of 15 June.

"The largest crowd ever in Decatur is here today . . . while the sun was rising parties were running to and fro to secure safe quarters for their teams," said the *Decatur, Illinois Daily Republican* of 30 August.

"There has been no such crowd known before in Kansas City. The old exposition ground was literally packed with humanity," said the *Wyandotte, Kansas Kansas Gazette* of 15 August.

"We were all through the war, and used to think that there was no equal to a lot of hungry soldiers at the dinner hour. But the rush inside the great museum for the circus entrance beats anything we ever saw, and the great human wave kept swelling on with no let up," said the *Delavan, Wisconsin, Republican* of 3 October.

In the arena the crowds saw Dan Castello's highly-trained horses, Czar, Senator and Flying Cloud; the horse-riding goat Alexis; Charles White in the lion cage; James Melville and his family on horseback; Lazelle and Milson on the flying trapeze; and Gipsy, the performing elephant. They also saw clowns, acrobats, leapers, all the stuff of the nineteenth century circus, none of it new, most of it the same as was seen on the Barnum lot in 1871.

James Melville was one of the leading bareback riders of the day. His rivals

were Charles Fish of the Lent show, James Robinson on his own circus, and Bob Stickney of the John Robinson company. Choosing among them would be very difficult.

Melville's son Frank was a pad rider, son George was a bareback rider and little Alexander rode a pony act. Lazelle and

THE GREATEST SHOW ON EARTH!!

P. T. BARNUM'S
Great Traveling
WORLD'S FAIR.
SEVEN SUPERIOR EXHIBITIONS IN
SIX SEPARATE COLOSSAL TENTS!
Which, at a Challenge of \$100,000, is
TEN TIMES LARGER THAN ANY OTHER SHOW EVER SEEN ON EARTH!!
—WELL KNOWN IN—
Clinton, Wednesday, September 11th, 1872.
Every Solitary Feature will be Exhibited as Advertised.



BARNUM'S WORLD'S FAIR.

THE MUSEUM
The Only Group of Monster Sea-Lions
The Only Group of Monster Sea-Lions
The Only Group of Monster Sea-Lions

THE MENAGERIE
Only Living Giraffe in America!
The Only Group of Monster Sea-Lions
The Only Group of Monster Sea-Lions

WILD FIRE CANNON
The Only Group of Monster Sea-Lions
The Only Group of Monster Sea-Lions

THE GREAT SHOW ON EARTH!!

Newspaper advertisement of the P. T. Barnum show in Clinton, Iowa in 1872. Pfening Archives.

Milson performed on a single trapeze and dismounted by flying from it to a hanging rope which they slid down. Monte Verde was a contortionist, Wash Antonio an acrobat, Gus Lee and George Madden the clowns. Excepting Melville, none of the company was head and shoulders over the competition. The show didn't advertise their skills as individuals. The *Akron, Ohio Daily Beacon* commented that John Robinson's Circus, which had preceded Barnum in that city, was actually superior.⁶

The big thing about Barnum's circus was Barnum. If it was Barnum's show, it was worth seeing and the massive advertising effort summoned the crowds from miles around. The *Cleveland, Ohio Plain Dealer* of 18 June editorialized that the reason for Barnum's success "it will be noted, is that Mr. Barnum advertises. He not only advertises, but advertises most thoroughly, he tells the public what he

has on exhibition and keeps impressing on everybody's mind that he is coming with a big show."

Part of the advertising, of course, was the daily street parade. In 1872 it was not far different from that of 1871, which is to say that it compared well with its rivals, excepting only the one presented by Howes' Great London.

Two agents in a buggy led the procession, followed by an elegant wagon devoted to the sale of Barnum's autobiography. Then came the "Orpheus" bandwagon pulled by twelve camels and four horses. Both this and the "Juno" we described in our previous article. Next came twenty cages, each with a four horse hitch. Some of these had automata on top, as they had the year before. Next came several ponies ridden by boys after which appeared a miniature coach pulled by four ponies and containing Admiral Dot, the midget. The large, revolving "Temple of Juno" with a two-camel hitch then approached, after which were twenty mounted men wearing suits of armor. There was another band, apparently hired locally at each stand, and finally more cages and the two elephants. Somewhere in the line was a glass-enclosed snake den complete with a snake charmer festooned with reptiles. This was the first glass sided cage to appear on American streets. Museum cages as well as animal dens were common in street shows of the day, so it is not possible to know the exact number of each, as they looked alike on the exterior.

Coup tried to operate a "Sunday School" show, as they came to be known. We find no references to any disreputable actions on the part of circus employees, but such a crowd puller attracted every thief and pickpocket who could afford train fare. The *Akron* paper printed a list of house break-ins and picked pockets on circus day. The show detectives apparently refused to eject the thieves they knew of, claiming they were there to protect Barnum's people, not the public.⁷ Other than this type of depredation, the show moved across the country almost without incident. This was an amazing feat, when one considers that sixty-some railroad cars were unloaded each morning, loaded each night, and a vast vacant lot (two acres at a minimum) was transformed into a thriving canvas city in between. Three cages were demolished in a switching accident between Erie and Corry, Pennsylvania; both engines and several cars were derailed in Cleveland; a member of the train crew drowned while bathing in a creek in Canton, Ohio; a teamster did the same while watering horses in Hamilton, Ohio. "My men got rest, were fresh, and ready for work," Coup said of the advantages of rail move-

ment and the lack of accidents reinforces that statement.

There were no clams reported in the press. We would guess that 130 working men would suffice to disabuse any local toughs from the idea of "raising dust," as the contemporary idiom had it.

An ordinance lay before the Cleveland city council which would have forbid circuses and menageries from appearing in that city. Barnum arrived the same day the ordinance was proposed, June 17. The *Plain Dealer* cautioned: "... thirty thousand people, mostly from the poorer classes, may be attracted to an exhibition of this nature in a single day, we should think that a body who are supposed to represent the people would think twice before depriving them of the privilege."⁸

There were three ticket wagons on the lot, one of which was reserved for ladies. Twenty-eight thousand admissions were sold in Cleveland in two days. In Sandusky, Ohio (population 13,000) there were twenty-six thousand sales for three performances. In Harrisburg, Pennsylvania thirty-thousand people attended on May 13; the receipts were announced as being \$8,000. We think this figure is the day's profit, as 30,000 tickets would produce something close to \$15,000. in receipts.

So much money was being shipped east by express from the circus-shipped under W. C. Coup's name—that the express company suspected it was the profits of a gambling operation and had detectives investigate.

Eighteen-seventy-two was not a good year for the circus business. Hot weather, especially in the west, had a tendency to keep the crowds down. It was an election year, always a slow time in the entertainment business since it focuses the people's attention away from frivolity. There was a late spring, thus the wagon shows were delayed in getting started because of bad roads. Twenty-two percent (10 of 45) of the 1872 circuses closed early. The Barnum show, however, grossed a million dollars, the first circus to achieve such a season's take. The profits exceeded \$200,000.⁹

The expenses were tremendous, of course. Over and above the cost of framing the show was the daily \$600 to \$1,000 for rail transportation. It cost \$3,000 to \$4,000 a day to keep the enterprise going. Coup didn't skimp in hiring or spending. He said years later: "Barnum had a propensity not to pinch pennies. Such expenditures, if applied to commercial (as opposed to entertainment) undertakings, would prove eminently disastrous."¹⁰

Speed and order, these were the by-words by which the show was operated. As is now well-known, in labor-intensive work efficiency is increased by increasing the number of workers. As we noted,

GREATEST SHOW ON EARTH!



P. T. BARNUM'S GREAT TRAVELING WORLD'S FAIR!

TRANSPORTED BY MEANS OF
Three Trains of Thirty-eight Cars Each!

WITH TWO LOCOMOTIVES TO EACH TRAIN,
Largest Combined Exposition on Earth, in 6 Separate Colonial-Texted
SEVEN SUPERIOR SHOWS FOR ONE PRICE OF ADMISSION.

Barnum's Museum, Menagerie, Caravan, Hippodrome, Poly-
technic Institute, International Zoological Garden, and
DAN. CASTELLO'S CHASTE AND REFINED CIRCUS!

With 100 of the Best Performers in the World.
100,000 Curiousities from all parts of the Earth; 800 Living, Rare Wild Animals.
Birds, Reptiles and Marine Monsters; 1,000 Men and Horses; 10 Parli-
ments cover several acres; more than a million capital furnished;
see time more than ever seen in an ordinary Show;
daily Expense exceed \$5,000—all of which
may be seen for a single 50 Cent.
Ticket, Children half price.

VINCENNES, THURSDAY, AUGUST 1st, 1872,

P. T. Barnum newspaper ad used in Vincennes, Indiana in 1872. Circus World Museum collection.

Coup's force, exclusive of menagerie men, numbered 130.

"Each man knows his duty and when a day's show is ended the vast tent and immense properties of all kinds are in two or three hours transported to the cars and are rolling away fifty to a hundred miles to be spread in another city." That was the comment of a New Hampshire editor.¹¹ Modern observers, aware of the efficiency and discipline required to put up and tear down a big railroad circus, may not wonder at Coup's ability to organize the 1872 operation, but it must be remembered that he had no experience of it prior to 1872.

Drunkenness among the employees was strictly forbidden; any man so observed was discharged immediately, according to press reports, a not inconsiderable attitude in the nineteenth century. "There is none of the rowdiness among the employees that is so common to travelling shows," said the *Dayton Journal*. The men were fed on the lot since the vast army could not be expected to find board and

room in hotels. A check-room on wheels was provided so that their personal goods could be protected.

Newspaper commentators, our most abundant source of information on shows of that era, were impressed by the orderliness, as we noted. The amount of advertising and the efforts of the press agents were also subjects of interest. J. L. Hutchinson and D. S. Thomas made it a habit to show newsmen about the show each day and to answer their questions. So much of this foretells the modern practise that one wonders if Coup might not qualify for the title of father of large circus operation.

Kit Clarke, a writer for the *New York Clipper* and erstwhile circus press agent, said of Coup after the 1871 show was in the barn: "There are very few men who could have managed the Barnum show as Billy Coup has done, for, besides displaying great executive ability and a wonderful foresight, he is always the gentleman, whether dealing with a governor or a canvas man; and hereafter, when the great Barnum show is mentioned, much of its success will be attributed to its able manager."¹²

The rhetoric of newspaper ad copy is seldom accepted as reality, yet we think a fitting close to this narrative can be taken from Barnum's 1872 press efforts, viz: "Of the millions of people who have visited Barnum's World's Fair since it left New York (transported by three trains of forty cars each) there is not a man, woman or child who will not say that it is not only twenty times the largest, but it is also the only legitimate, undivided, unepitomized, most expensive and elaborate of exhibitions ever known. . . ."

Footnotes

1. W. C. Coup, *Sawdust and Spangles*, (Rudell reprint, Washington, D.C., 1961), p. 61.
2. Fred Dahlinger, Jr., "The Development of the Railroad Circus," *Bandwagon*, xxvii:6, 1, 2 and 3 (1983 and 1984).
3. Robert J. Loeffler, Moorhead, Minnesota, analyzed newspaper reports to determine the actual number of cars in Barnum's 1872 train. *White Tops*, LVI:3 (1983), pp. 35-43.
4. *Toledo Blade*, 27 June 1872.
5. *Republican and Leader* (LaCrosse, Wisconsin), 28 September 1872.
6. *Daily Beacon* (Akron, Ohio), 17 June 1872.
7. *Ibid.*
8. *Plain Dealer* (Cleveland, Ohio), 18 June 1872.
9. "P. T. Barnum of Connecticut," copy of article by C. G. Sturtevant in Chindahl Papers, Circus World Museum, Baraboo, Wisconsin.
10. *New York Clipper*, 16 May 1891.
11. *Daily Evening Times* (Portsmouth, New Hampshire), 28 May 1872.
12. *New York Clipper*, 25 November 1871.

A copy of the rare 1872 Barnum route book is in the collection of the Circus World Museum. This article was enhanced by information from that source.

Poets are fairly mad for springtime. Check the stacks of the library. You'll find shelves fairly groaning with protracted, heartfelt odes to darling buds and cunning little birds who sit and sing.

Pour through all you can stomach of this high-blown posey. Even as your sugar level climbs to alarming heights, you won't find even passing mention of the vernal season's unlikely, rather quirky sense of the absurd. That's the only rational explanation for its annual foray into New York City disguised as a herd of elephants.

For well over a hundred springtimes, the return to Manhattan of Ringling Bros., & Barnum and Bailey or both (they merged in 1919) has coincided with winter's reluctant, inevitable exit. Deep in their tribal memories, New Yorkers somehow know that the curious sight of several dozen elephants lumbering down midtown avenues portends spring with far more precision than any number of impatient crocuses or anxious robins. Credit circus press agents, past and present, for a job well done.

By late February, the Manhattan circus drum beater has long since propelled into felicitous flight his favorite act, The Flying Cliches. Yet in these astonishing arabesques of alliteration, linking the shared delights of spring and circus, the true reason for Ringling's arrival in Manhattan by early April is never revealed. The magical spell of the season, alas, has little to do with it.

We're talking business here. Big business. The circus is an authentic American institution whose continued prosperity

er, more impressionable journalist that the whole "circus-spring" concept was his very own creation.

Twenty-two springs ago—April 3, 1968, it was—the elephants returned. For the forty-three years previous, Ringling's Manhattan address had been Eighth Avenue and 50th Street, within the third arena named Madison Square Garden. This year the show that calls itself the greatest on earth

was christening Garden #4. This glossy edifice perched atop the new Penn Station, some twenty blocks further downtown.

My alarm rang long before dawn that day, my first as a circus publicist in New York. Before me was the task of escorting the walking animals—elephants, horses, camels, zebras et. al.—from the circus train's unloading sight in the Bronx, through Central Park, and finally down Ninth Avenue to the new arena at 34th Street.

New Yorkers have earned a far-flung, mostly merited reputation as God's most blasé creations. They've seen it all, done it all and, frankly, weren't that impressed. Walking with my exotic menagerie that chilly morning, I learned something. The sight of two dozen elephants gamboling in midtown induces even the most jaded cliff-dweller to glance up from his paper. For thirty seconds anyhow.

Though the march is the most practical way of moving animals from train to Garden, the circus has other good reasons to clog the traffic.

News crews from channels 2, 4 and 7 nearly always show up. A *Daily News* photographer is inevitable, as are the two shots printed in the next day's centerfold. Every few years an Associated Press photographer covers the march. A shot of elephants, with skyscrapers in the background, moves on the national wire over the caption: "Spring returns to Manhattan."

All my life I'd loved the circus. Now was my chance to join one of its most exclusive societies: the brotherhood of men and women in whose veins pump pure sawdust. The big top press agents.

I'd heard countless tales of my predecessors—Dexter Fells, Roland Butler, Bill Fields, Bev Kelley, Bill Doll. Each is a respected member

The Elephants of Spring

By Jack Ryan

depends in no small measure on the adroit exploitation of parental guilt—"don't deprive your kids of a visit to the circus . . . relive your childhood . . . remember what fun it was when *your* parents took *you*?" The millions of youngsters footloose for a week or so at Easter/Passover time in Greater New York represents a potential bonanza at the box office.

For the circus publicist, employing rings as symbols of spring is a profitable tactic. Because it works—last year, this year, all the years since P. T. Barnum's Great Roman Hippodrome threw open its doors in April, 1874, at Fourth and Madison, across the Avenue from Madison Square. With luck and experience, you can occasionally convince a young-

"Spring returns to Manhattan" as Marcella leads the Ringling-Barnum elephant herd down 9th Avenue in New York City on April 1, 1956. Pfening Archives.



of the hokum hall of fame. To win junior membership, I needed to create some opening day press coverage beyond the hoary circus equals springtime angle. I had no ideas.

The animals moved through the park that morning, cheered on by hundreds of excited kids. (We thoughtfully provided route and time schedule to every grade school from Harlem to Columbus Circle.) Leaving the park at Tavern on the Green, the procession turned west for a block, then headed downtown on Ninth Avenue.

As we turned, a young reporter I vaguely knew fell into step with us. He worked the city desk of a major daily which had said it probably wouldn't cover the march. "Thank God," I thought. "A slow news day!"

Just then a light bulb--the kind that regularly flash over the heads of people in comic strips--exploded in my head. Barnum be praised! From out there, somewhere, had arrived, full-blown, an honest-to-goodness, inspired chunk of circus humbug. I hoped I had the moxie to pull it off.

Hellos exchanged with the writer, I excused myself to jog to the front of the

march. If the scheme was to work, big help was needed from Ringling's longtime elephant honcho, the late Capt. Hugo Schmitt. Although a respected animal trainer, I knew that Capt. Hugo wasn't famous for his sense of humor.

He listened patiently as I explained. From years of experience I think he knew that circus publicists' inspirations are often wacko but essentially pretty harmless. A tiny Teutonic chuckle--I think it was a chuckle--even escaped his lips as he agreed to help.

Back with the reporter, I launched into my rote barrage of heavy circus facts. ("An elephant's trunk contains 40,000 individual muscles," "All circus rings, everywhere in the world, measure exactly forty-two feet in diameter" ad nauseam.) As I babbled, the march began to slow. Within seconds it stopped dead.

"I'd better see what's happening," I told him. "Come with me if you like." We reached the front of the stalled procession to find Capt. Hugo ranting and raving in his native German into the massive ear of an elephant named Marcella. A grand old lady, she reigned as queen of the Ringling elephant herd for nearly three decades. (Elephants choose their own leader, with

no help from humans. But that's another story.)

"Marcella is acting the stubborn girl," said the captain with what I considered admirable exasperation. "You see she's come to Manhattan for thirty years to the old Garden. Always we turn left here at 50th Street. I tell her, 'Marcella, keep going.' Still she won't budge. Not an inch."

"You mean she remembers where she turned?" asked the wide-eyed reporter.

"Remembers? Of course she remembers!" Capt. Hugo replied.

After the writer jotted several pages of notes, Marcella gave in, forgot the past and headed down Ninth.

The next day's edition of the reporter's prestigious journal carried a charming piece about the terrific elephant who didn't forget. Before the story wrapped, I was gratified to see quite a few thoughtful, quasi-poetic references to the serendipitous marriage of springtime and circus.

Most people don't pay much attention when they pass the corner of Ninth Avenue and 50th Street. But, for me, it's a special spot where, a long time ago, a nervous young circus press agent finally won his rings.

All three of 'em.

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James T. Johnson, badly burned by the preceding season, left the Great Western Circus in mothballs during the season of 1887 and sought to recoup his losses by a low-nut presentation of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*.

The Kansas press did not report how the Tom show fared, but, according to the *New York Clipper* of July 2, his luck did not desert him. In a letter quoted in the *Clipper* Johnson wrote, "One of my men was shot dead by one of my company. Albert Weiser was his stage name, his right name being William P. Graw. The assailant is now in jail in Colorado, and will be tried by the Fall term of the courts in September."

Johnson arrived in Pratt, Kansas, in September and presented *Uncle Tom* to good crowds in a rented hall on the 26th and 27th.

Every Kansas town in 1887 was being promoted wildly and each thought itself to be the "coming metropolis." Pratt was no exception. Johnson, ever the opportunist, seized the chance to exploit the enthusiasm of the town fathers. The *Pratt County Press*, September 29, reported that Johnson had "made arrangements with the city council for ground upon the square where he will soon commence the erection of an amphitheater. He is so well pleased with Pratt that he will winter with us and give us first-class entertainment every week."

The land on the square cost Johnson nothing and by the middle of October construction was under way. There are no reports on the financing of the amphitheater, but, considering his previous promotions and his skills as a confidence man, it is more than likely that the building cost him no more than did the land on which it sat.

"Mr. Johnson, our veteran showman, is now better than ever prepared to cater to the amusement loving public," according to the *Press* of October 27. "He has just secured from Kansas City four dramatic people and will render in the future many of the popular dramas of the day."

The *Press* of November 10 reported that, "Johnson's opera house seems to be doing a nice business, playing to good houses every night. *Ten Nights in a Bar-room* was put on the boards last Saturday night, in which the Johnson sisters did their part exceedingly well. So did E. Baldridge, in Joe Morgan, render his part well. In fact the play was a success financially. Company good and gave good satisfaction."

THE ONLY TRIPLE-HORNED UNICORN

Chapter 2 Part One

The Most Superlative Scene of Splendor Ever Beheld By The Eye Of Mortal Man

By Orin Copple King

Copyright 1990 Orin Copple King

Two weeks later on November 24 the *Press* announced that, "Johnson's show will take the road this week. Owing to the dull times the company hasn't been financially successful in Pratt."

The following week the *Press* carried its last report on Johnson.

"Johnson's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* will leave Pratt for a short time on a trip and return back to the city and give us the play of the Octroon (sic) in the new hall."

The story closed on a note of skepticism. "He also will organize his big show here in the spring—So he says."

Johnson did not return to Pratt.

There was a small show trouping through Kansas in 1887 that was not at all sure of its name.

The *Pittsburg Daily Headlight* of May 31 carried the following, "The tent of the Great Eastern circus has been erected in the southwest part of town this morning. The proprietor of the show Mr. Hobson is preparing to start out on the road." What happened after the tent was raised was of no interest to the *Headlight* and was not reported.

The *New York Clipper* of July 2 (pg 242), provided a few details:

"The following is the roster of Hobson Bros. New York and New England Show: C. D. and Sylvester Hobson, managers; Howard S. Hobson, treasurer; the performers are: Homer D. Hobson, Horace

W. Hobson, T. T. Ball, Carl Clair, Dock Miller, Chauncey Powell, Mme. Trovena, Miss Dock, Miss Freddie Peasly, Charles and Lou Lacleed, Ed. Murphy, Howell and Scanlin, Prof. Davis and his dogs, and Prof. B. J. Bicker, leader of the band. The show opened season at Pittsburg, Kas., June 25, and will travel through Missouri, Illinois, etc., thence south. It travels by wagon and has sixty head of stock."

By the time the show reached Medicine Lodge on July 26 it was Hobson's Lone Star Circus. The Medicine Lodge *Chief* thought it, About the poorest excuse of a show we have ever seen."

The *Barber County Index*, Medicine Lodge, July 27, called it, "the worst that ever came this way. Here yesterday it pretended to give an exhibition. A lot of school boys with three stiff work horses could give a better show."

The exhibitions at Lake City on July 27 were described by the *Sun City Union* as "decidedly a snide affair."

Concerning the exhibitions at Stafford July 30, the *Republican* had a few sarcastic remarks.

"A Thing of the Past.

"It has come and gone—the circus, we mean—and has left an aching void in many a pocket book and food for thought of an elevating, ennobling nature in many a mind. Charity demands that we cover up its faults and defects and mention only its virtues and redeeming qualities. We will try and notice some of them.

"First, we find that it imparted fresh life and vigor to the enervated who had not strength or vigor enough to enable them to attend the prayer meeting or Sunday service, or even to call upon their sick neighbor.

"Secondly, it afforded opportunity for a display of interest in children. Many of the adult Christians who attended the circus cared nothing for it themselves; but it was so nice for the children and the little ones wanted to go so bad that they just went in order to give the children an opportunity to see the sights.

"Thirdly, there was a manifest improvement in the financial condition of the community. Many who for some time had been very anxious to pay the small amount due the wash woman, or the grocer but could not possibly raise the money, suddenly found themselves possessed of enough money to pay their way into the circus and to take the whole family with them.

"Fourthly, the circus has a purifying

tendency. As wealth begets ease and luxury begets vice, the taking away from the community of several hundred dollars by the circus would prevent the accumulating of wealth and act as a check to vice.

"Verily, the circus is a good thing, old fogies and cranks to the contrary notwithstanding."

In another column the *Republican* commented that, "The circus, last Saturday, drew quite a large crowd and gathered in a good many dollars that could have been used to a better purpose."

The *Stafford County Democrat* of August 4 covered show day in three short sentences.

"The Hobson Bros. advertise 'one mile of glittering gold,' but they forget that 'all is not gold that glitters.'"

"Our show on Saturday did not amount to very much; they looked like a lot of tramps."

"We had a delightful rain on last Saturday and Sunday."

The *St. John Advance*, speaking of the exhibitions of August 1, thought that, "As a general thing the small boys were happy last Monday."

"How many of your fat chickens disappeared last Monday night?"

"The snide show of Monday took in a good too many quarters."

"Last Monday was an unusual dull day in town. It seemed that the show caused a great many to stay at home who would otherwise have come to town. It's a good idea to guard your premises when such larks are in the neighborhood."

"The attendance at the snide show was not very large, as our people know a humbug when they see it."

The *County Capital*, *St. John*, a competitor of the *Advance*, claimed that, "Many people were in the city, Monday, to see the circus."

St. John's third paper, *The Sun*, reported trouble on the show grounds: "Charles Smith and L. T. Collins, two persons traveling with a circus that was in the city Monday had a hand to hand encounter and had each other arrested. Smith replenished the city treasury by one dollar and Collins being the greater offender, with five."

Three newspapers in a town with less than 1,000 persons is impressive, but in Kansas the printer came hard on the heels of the saloon keeper and the gambler, and editorial competition was nearly as vicious as the struggle between the lawman and the outlaw.

The newsmen held a lofty position in the booming towns of Kansas and as community leaders the editors campaigned for schools, churches and prohibition, and read their own opinions in their own columns so often that they came to believe

themselves omnipotent oracles of near infallibility.

It was Hobson's New York and New England that played Larned on August 2. At none of the foregoing towns did the show use one line of newspaper advertising and it was no different at Larned. The absence of newspaper advertising prompted the *Weekly Eagle-Optic* to run the following:

"That Humbug Circus."

"Several days ago a bill wagon passed

COMING COMING

A Genuine, Old Fashioned

One Ring Show!

WILL BE IN PAWNEE ROCK ON

Wednesday, August 3rd, 1887.

No Humbug! It is the Celebrated New York & New England Circus, the

Largest Wagon Show on the Earth!

Consisting of

100 MEN AND WOMEN AND 80 HORSES!

With a General Admission Fee of

Twenty-Five Cts.

Which admits to all!

FIRST CLASS PERFORMERS!

EVERYTHING FIRST CLASS!

A Street Parade

At 10:30 A. M. Rain or Shine!

DONT - FORGET - THE - DATE!

This Hobson Bros. newspaper ad appeared in the *Pawnee Rock, Kansas Leader* on July 29, 1887. Kansas State Historical Society.

through this section and covered all available places with highly colored posters announcing the approach of Hobson Bros.' circus. The advance scout, as is generally the case with snide outfits, kept away from the newspaper offices, and the result was that there were few people who made any preparations to attend. The people of this section know that all reputable concerns, in every line of business, are certain to advertise their wares in the energetic home newspapers and not seeing the announcement of the circus in the paper they stayed home. The con-

sequences was that when a straggling (sic) outfit of a 'one horse' circus stole quietly up Main street last Tuesday morning there were but few disappointed people who were looking for 'the procession.' After dinner a solitary band wagon with eight red shirted players came down town and made the 'parade.'

Their one small tent was amply sufficient to hold all who desired to attend the 'performance,' and Hobson Bros'. great humbug circus left for same place where victims could be found in greater plenty than in this vicinity. The people who live in the country tributary to Larned may rest assured when they see a circus or play announced by posters, unaccompanied by newspaper advertising, that they will be wasting their time if they come to town to attend."

The only newspaper advertisement so far discovered appeared in the *Pawnee Rock Leader* of July 29 touting the exhibitions of Wednesday, August 3. The ad announced the coming of "A Genuine, Old Fashioned One Ring Show!" It was clearly stated that it was "No Humbug! It is the Celebrated New York and New England Circus," and was "the Largest Wagon Show On Earth! Consisting of 100 men and 80 Horses!" One 25 cent ticket would admit to all. "A Street Parade At 10:30 A. M. Rain or Shine!"

Following show day the *Leader* reported that, "The snide outfit who covered about ten square feet of earth, with rotten muslin here Wednesday will soon reach the end of their rope. The ticket agent tried to work off some 'queer' money on the people here in making change, but did not succeed. He should have been entered on the police docket."

"To say that it was snide feebly expresses it," according to the *Leader*. "It requires great nerve to steer (sic) such an exhibition of broken down horses and fifth class performers."

The greatest insult, however, appeared in a different column of the *Leader*.

"It is rumored that Hobson's New York & New England 'circus' is the D. M. & A. (railroad) grading outfit enroute to the eastern part of Rice county."

Geo. W. DeHaven's Show Company, Museum, Theater, Triple Show and Free Menagerie billed exhibitions for August 12 at Fall River, one of only three stops scheduled for Kansas. The other two towns are as yet undiscovered. A small ad without illustrations appeared in the *Courant* a week before the Fall River date and is quoted below in its entirety.

"The Geo. W. DeHaven's
Show Company
Museum, Theater, Triple
Show and

Free Menagerie. Will Exhibit in
Fall River, August 12, 1887.

"August 12th will be a gala day for Fall River and surrounding country, as a show comes to give us a day of fun. All work and no play, makes dull boys. Every farmer should give his boys a day off and spend the day in amusement. There is nothing that adds to health, like fun. Judging from appearances and the notices given them by the press at places they have exhibited, we can say that it will be well worth the price of admission. This show travels by rail and makes only three stops in the State. They advertise the finest disposed elephant in the world. Leopards, Lions, the only Sacred cow, Hyenas, in fact a rare collection of wild animals. Of course there will be only standing room for half the people, hence it is unnecessary for us to say more."

"DeHaven's Show has come and gone," the *Courant* reported on the 19th, "and with it many a hard earned dollar. But be it said, greatly to the credit of the Show, that it was the first and only moral Show that has ever visited this part of the country. The employees, from the manager down, with but two exceptions were gentlemen. The Artists were all first-class in their profession, but the Menagerie was somewhat limited."

One wonders about the two employees who were not gentlemen.

Prof. Charles Address was a man of remarkable talents, adept at legerdemain and the training of birds and small animals. Address was born in Canada in 1852 and from the age of ten had been a professional entertainer beginning his career as an assistant to Prof. Hertz, a magician.

Address was a good student and while still in his teens presented his own act of magic, bird calls and ventriloquism, later adding trained animals. He had a clean little railroad circus and an excellent reputation which attracted the attention of Allen and Willie Sells.

Soon after his venture with Willie, Address was broke and showless. The story of the Sells and Address circus will be told at a later time.

Following the Sells disaster Address spent several years working for other showmen, including the Ringling brothers. While touring with Barnum & Bailey he discovered Great Bend, Kansas, and invested his surplus funds in Great Bend real estate. The town became his home

and he died there of influenza on August 26, 1933, at the age of 82. His private life was, to say the least, unusual. In 1930 at the age of 78 he married Virginia Pritchard, 27. A son was born two years later.

Address in 1887 was touring his own railroad show under the title of Address' Grand Carnival of Novelties and Trained Animal Exposition. Troy was booked for September 10. The *Weekly Kansas Chief* carried the following handout, September 1:

"A Big Show Coming!--The circus has missed us, this year; but we are to have something just as good. The Address Carnival of Novelties will be here on the 10th of September. Except there is no horse riding, it will in other respects be equal to a circus, and in same things superior. The acrobatic performances are wonderful, as are also the exhibitions of trained animals and birds, the jugglery, ventriloquism, clown's fun, etc. What is no drawback to the occasion, is the fact that the prices are down to hard time figures. Only 25 cents for grown persons, and 15 cents for children. It will doubtless be the only show Troy will have this season."

A two-column display ad featured "100 Elegant and Useful Presents given away nightly! ALL PURCHASED FROM MERCHANTS OF THIS CITY." It was the "MASCOT SHOW OF AMERICA."

A paragraph of small type stated, "Twenty-five years before the public. Not a mere experiment by inexperienced

in fact, a show of new ideas to this world unknown."

Top billing went to Address who presented "Educated Tropical Birds," "Performing Rocky Mountain Goats," and "Performing Brazil Dogs."

Mme. Address was billed as "Assistant in Diablerie," which probably meant that she helped Address in his feats of magic.

Other performers were:

"JOHN H. BATCHELOR

Champion Leaper of the World

"MISS OLLIE MAYNARD

Iron Jawed Aerialist

"MR. JOE LEWIS

Serpent or Boneless Man

"THE BROTHERS DeVAIL, TOM

AND BILLY

Premier Acrobats and Gymnasts of the World

"MR. MARK MAYNARD

King of the Double Flying Trapeze

"BILLY O'BRIAN

Rope Dancer and Wonderful Clown Leaper

"MAX HUGO

The Wonderful Clown Juggler

"MISS EMMA MAYNARD

The Queen of the High Wire

"MRS. DOC MILLER

The Aerial Pyramid Balancer

"MISS OLLIE MAYNARD

The Wonderful Slack Wire Artist

"CORPS OF

Vaulters, Leapers & Tumblers."

It was announced that the band would

parade the town and that "at 7 the young lady would walk the high wire." The ad made no mention of a matinee. General admission was 25¢. Children under ten years, 15¢. "No children admitted free."

For another dime one could have a reserved seat with a foot and back rest and an extra chance in the drawing for the presents.

Unfortunately, Troy saw none of the above.

"The Address Show did not exhibit here, Saturday," the *Chief* reported on September 15.

"They came, but the day

was so terribly bad, they decided not to put up their canvas. So Troy has lost her only show for the season, and we have had the side of our building messed up for nothing."

The *Almena Star* had great hopes for the season of 1887 when it reported on June 9 that John B. Dorris' (sic) great Circus will visit Almena this summer. The

MY TRADE MARK STILL THERE.
TRADE DON'T OWE A DOLLAR SALARY. MARK

ADDRESS'

GRAND AND TRAINED
CARNIVAL OF NOVELTIES ANIMAL
SHOWS



Charles Address ad in the February 19, 1887 *New York Clipper*. Pfening Archives.

would be showmen, but a solid Railroad Show, owning and controlling its own beautiful train of cars, conducting business on business principles, representing a capital of over Fifty thousand Dollars (\$50,000) invested. Entirely new throughout. New cars, new tents, new trappings,

Star will give note of it in due time." The "note" never came and neither did Doris & Colvin's Colossal Shows Combined, Circus, Menagerie, Hippodrome and Wild West which got no closer to Almena than Concordia, more than a hundred miles away. Although Almena was out in the cold, thirty-three other Kansas towns enjoyed the entertainment presented by Doris & Colvin.

The first Kansas exhibitions were at Ottawa on August 2. The *Journal and Triumph* carried a two column ad on July 21 and again on the 28th. It was announced as "The Last and Best Show of the Year!" The advertised star of the show was "The Restless Spirit of the Plains," Captain Elmer E. Stubbs, who was proclaimed "The Champion Rifle, Revolver and General Shot of the World."

If Stubbs were only half as good as the press department claimed he would have been very good indeed. The following handout modestly proclaimed his abilities:

"A Most Remarkable Marksman.

"Capt. Elmer E. Stubbs, the Champion combination wing shot of the world, with rifle, revolver and shot gun, has the greatest record of any living marksman. The attempt to give but a faint idea here of the marvelous execution of this wonderful marksman with the rifle would be to court an impossibility. Capt. Stubbs, accompanied by Gen. Sherman and a party of diplomats, from Washington, D. C., once went buffalo hunting in Texas, and the way the Captain bulletted bisons was a terror to the band. His record for the first sally at the prairie kings was thirty-nine buffaloes in thirty-eight minutes. The Captain has repeatedly broken 100 glass balls, springing from a trap, in 100 consecutive shots. He has driven an eight-penny nail to the head in a pine plank in three successive shots, and will pierce a silver dime through the center every time at 200 yards. He will snuff candles with a revolver from horseback with a skill and degree of accuracy which is simply surprising; and, in fact, he can make almost any shot within the range of possibility while flying on the back of a running horse or standing on the ground. Captain Stubbs appears at every performance of the great Doris & Colvin shows, which will surely exhibit at Ottawa on Tuesday, August 2nd. He is the leader of the scouts, cowboys, frontiersmen, Mexican vaqueros, bull-fighters, lassoists, ranchmen, etc., in the New Wild West."

The ad in the *Journal & Triumph* mentioned the Grandest Roman Hippodrome, Wild West Heroes and Heroines, a Mag-

nificent and Multitudinous Menagerie and

"OUR GRAND FREE STREET PARADE!

"The most superlative scene of splendor ever beheld by the eye of mortal man. More golden chariots, blazing vans, mythical tableau cars, brilliant band wagons, crystal vans, mounted male and female riders, harnessed elephants, camels, moose, zebras and elks, and a world of mellifluous music. More sights than tongue can tell, free to all every morning at 10 o'clock."



John B. Doris principal owner of the 1887 Doris & Colvin Circus. Pfening Archives.

The people of Ottawa were undoubtedly pleased with Doris & Colvin's generous proclamation that the Street Parade was "FREE TO ALL."

J. W. Black who supplied groceries to S. H. Barrett was also favored by Doris & Colvin. "Circus people buy their supplies where they can get the most for their money, and as a matter of course, Doris & Colvin have contracted with J. W. Black to supply them with groceries when they exhibit in Ottawa, August 2d."

Prior to Circus Day the *Journal & Triumph* took scant notice of the coming show and after the exhibitions took none at all, except to report that, "Mrs. S. F. Lester and her children, of Quenemo, visited Len Lester and family this week and attended the circus." Without Mrs. Lester

and her children there would be no confirmation that the town was played.

An advertisement in the *Burlington Republican-Patriot* for the exhibitions of August 3 gave the public a more extensive description of the wild west contingent than did the ads for Ottawa.

"In our great Wild West exhibition.

"Whole schools of medicine men and droves of Indian ponies,

"Whole company of greasy Mexican Vaqueros,

"Whole villages of trophies,

"Whole camp of cowboys,

"Whole bouquet of cowgirls,

"Whole tribes of Indians,

"Whole families of squaws and bright, cute papooses,

"Mexican bullfighters, pulque gatherers, Tracadores and bandits."

A listing of creatures in "our magnificent and multitudinous menagerie" could be grouped as droves, herds, lairs, dens, flocks and hosts.

There were droves of performing elephants, bison, trained horses, kangaroos, antelopes, moose and elk.

There were herds of camels, elands, giraffes, dromedaries and zebras.

There were lairs of crocodiles, alligators and serpents.

There were dens of leopards, jaguars, hyenas, Polar bears, grizzly bears and wild tigers.

There were flocks of ostriches and hosts of "heaven-soaring" birds.

"And thousands of animals, birds and reptiles of all kinds."

The *Republican-Patriot* picked up the following item from the *Atchison Globe*:

"THE SCRIBE AT THE CIRCUS.

"Oh, the drums were heard, and the piccolo note, as the circus uptown paraded, and the shorn-off mule and the whiskered goat and the elephant amber-shaded. I followed it calmly at early morn, my work and my labors spurning, and I harked to the sound of a rusty horn with a wild and unhallowed yearning. Few and short were the tunes they played, and they paused not at all to monkey; so I slowly followed the route they made, at the heels of the lop-eared donkey. I bought up a seat at the show that night, and looked at the limber woman, who tied herself in a knot so tight she seemed more like hemp than human. And I eagerly looked at the wondrous bloke, who swallowed some cotton blazing, and blew from his nostrils a cloud of smoke till I thought he was sheolrasing. And I watched the clown, as he ran and rolled, and stood in a dozen poses, and worked off a string of jokes so old, they came from the time of Moses."

The only report following the exhibitions was that of the *Burlington In-*

Doris & Colvin's Colossal Shows came to Chanute August 5. Races and Romans

and in all things best arrangement; enterprises ever organised

"Never in the glorious days of the Caesars, when purple-robed emperors, surrounded by ladies, peers and sages, looked upon the gladiatorial sports in the Coliseum of ancient Rome, were such sights of bewildering horsemanship seen as are witnessed in the Grand Hippodrome of the Great Doris & Colvin's Colossal Shows—Roman chariot riding by men and women of intrepidity and skill, who fly behind Arabian chargers in golden chariots, formed upon the ancient models, but driven with a speed never attained by any other horses, ancient or modern. The Roman standing racing and the trotting and running races are also unequalled by any other exhibition. Races of all kinds are run, such as elephant and camel races, man against horse, woman against pony, Indian against pony, wheel-

Doris & Colvin played Winfield on August 8. The *Weekly Courier* carried a story on the 11th concerning the wreck of the show train which is typical of news reporting of a period when rumor was nearly as good as fact and always more inter-

ly as good as fact and always more interesting.

"A CIRCUS COLLAPSED.

"The Doris-Colvin show which exhibited here Monday met with a serious accident near Oxford at an early hour Tuesday morning. The car containing the elephants and camels broke an axle, killing two camels and injuring the elephants very badly. The show did not get away from the scene of the wreck until two o'clock and missed their show at Harper. No persons were injured."

The story as reported at Winfield did not escape the notice of the *Oxford Register* which set the record straight.

"Now the facts are that neither of the camels were killed, but one of them was badly injured. The show got away from this place about eleven o'clock in the forenoon, and went to Kiowa, where it was billed for Tuesday, instead of Harper."

Doris & Colvin arrived in Kiowa too late to give an afternoon show. The *Kiowa Herald* carried a review of the evening performance.

"The Circus.

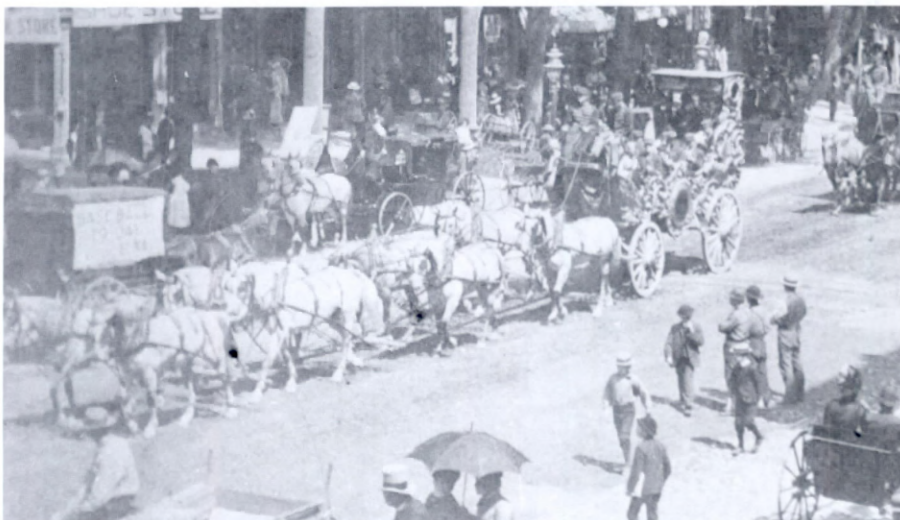
"Dorris (sic) & Colvin's Circus Co., gave an exhibition in this city on Tuesday night last to a very small audience who were considerably disappointed as the acting and general features of the entertainment did not half fulfill their anticipations. Capt. Stubb's shooting exhibition was really the most creditable part of the performance, as he performed some remarkable feats of marksmanship. Buckskin Jo was exceedingly thin, while the Custer massacre was the gauziest affair we have seen in many a day with the exception of the attack on the stage coach. The chariot races were moderately fair but extremely dangerous, while the trapeze performances were very inferior. The best feature of the circus was the absence of the usual supply of faikers (sic), pick-pockets and swindlers."

At Medicine Lodge on August 10 the change making swindler was thwarted by the town marshal, according to the *Barber County Index*, one of the village's three newspapers.

"A trick that appears to follow every circus appeared here last week. When a man goes to buy his ticket and exhibits a roll of bills or a pile of silver, the ticket seller, or same capper standing by, asks the unsuspecting ticket-buyer to give him change for a bill or take small bills for a

larger one. If the innocent agrees to be accommodating, he is invariably swindled in the deal. Marshal Horney recovered money for no less than a dozen victims last Wednesday, the amounts ranging from \$5 to \$50. Doris & Colvin should see that their show does not get a bad reputation through the acts of the fakirs."

"The Doris-Colvin show gave two creditable exhibitions here last Wednesday,"



Band chariot in an 1887 parade of the Doris & Colvin show. Circus World Museum collection.

the *Index* reported. "Capt. Stubbs and his wild west outfit was the best part of the performance."

The Medicine Lodge *Chief* disagreed with the *Index* stating that, "The cow-boy part was thin, for this country--the home of cow-boys--the rest of the performances were good enough." There was also a difference of opinion concerning the camel that was injured at Oxford. The *Chief* reported that, "The show people left a crippled camel here, with Dr. Ayers, for treatment. It was badly hurt in a railroad wreck and will probably die." The Medicine Lodge *Cresset* related that, "The only injury done Doris & Colvin's show at Oxford smashup, except injuring the cars some, was to throw a dromedaries hip out of place. The animal did not receive surgical attendance until this point was reached when his bones were put together right."

The *Cresset* had a variant opinion of the show itself. The *Chief* was not favorably impressed with the Doris & Colvin aggregation, but the *Cresset* proclaimed, "Big show yesterday. The biggest ever seen in Medicine Lodge or this part of the country. Street parade elegant, circus above the average and menagerie the best ever in this section."

The *Caldwell News*, speaking of the exhibitions of August 12, expressed the

opinion that, "People will go to a circus, hard or soft times. The crowd was not so large as it would have been under better times, but it was large enough to insure the management a large profit."

The *News* reported that, "The show yesterday, taken altogether was a large affair and possessed some points of excellence. The parade was not as elaborate as Barrett's (June 10) but quite as long. Capt.

Stubbs' shooting was the best performance of the day, although the circus rings were filled with good artists. The Wild West was not so much of a novelty in this section as it would be east. The crowd in attendance was large considering the times."

The most tantalizing report in the *News* was "Cosand & Herndon made some excellent street views of the parade yesterday." Where

are the pictures one hundred years later?

Doris & Colvin arrived in Newton on August 16 accompanied by a "cool refreshing rain," according to the *Newton Ransan*. "It has been somewhat muddy today, but people seem to care very little for either rain or mud when there is a circus in town."

Mud on the vacant lot west of the Santa Fe round house was not deep enough to prevent the show from being witnessed by a large crowd in the evening. "It is without a doubt the best show that has visited Newton for some time," the *Kansan* reported, "each and every part of the performance, being exceptionally good. We can't say as much for the music, for it was without a doubt the poorest music we ever heard rendered by a traveling concern."

An echo of the Oxford wreck reached Newton, August 31, with a report in the *Kansan* that, "One of the Doris and Colvin's railroad cars passed through here this morning attached to an east bound freight. It had been badly wrecked on the road farther west." The rewards to the depot loafer were many and varied.

Featured in many ads was "Katamorra, Queen of the Reptile World." The illustration used showed the "Queen" adorned with countless reptiles and standing in the midst of hundreds more, none of which were less than gigantic. The snakes were apparently more than a press agent's D. T.s for the Great Bend *Tribune*

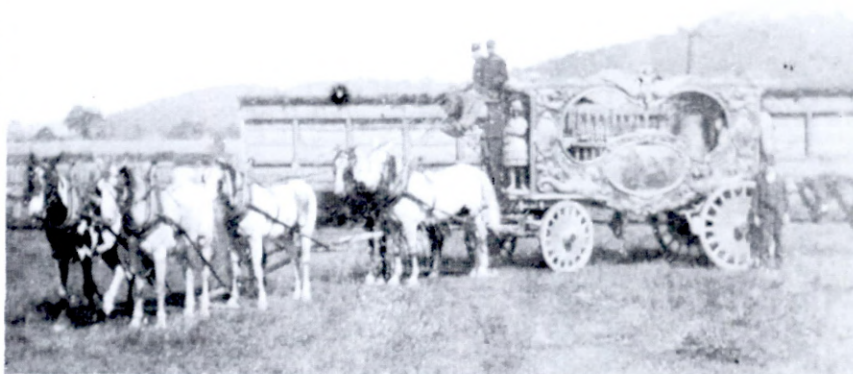
accompanied by two ladies and as we stepped to the exit from the menagerie to the circus tent, we were accosted by a ticket seller who offered us three tickets for reserved seats for *fifteen cents*. The regular price is twenty five cents a ticket and the small sum of five cents asked aroused our suspicion that they were bogus. But this was quieted by the knowledge that the attendance would be slim and they had taken this course to get every nickle they could. It was a different object altogether. We took the three tickets, which were all right, handing him half a dollar at the same time. Taking the half he fumbled the money he held in his left hand and, finding no change (of course not) he politely asked us to step to the light so that 'we could see to make change.' We did so, when he said, 'wouldn't you just as soon let me have a greenback, I've got a good deal of silver and want to get rid of it.' To accommodate him we took back the half and handed him a five dollar bill. Taking it he crumpled it up with his finger and thumb of his

right hand and adroitly worked it toward his little finger, his hand closed all the time. Now he discovers that 'as we have ladies with us we don't want to be loaded down with silver, and he graciously and exceedingly gentlemanly, offers to change the half dollar, at the same time handing back a bill in the same crumpled condition. Handing him the half we looked at the bill and lo! it was a *one!* demanding back our five, at the same time denouncing him as a 'd--nd thief, the bill was returned to us; he at the same time remarking 'O your excited.'(sic) We very coolly, yet decidedly informed him that we were perfectly cool, but didn't propose to be done out of a five by a d--nd circus thief like him. This he took without betraying the slightest emotion, which proves him to be an accomplished thief and probably employed by the circus company because he is an expert thief.

"This game has been played here before. One man got beat out of \$9 and several others \$5 each, to our knowledge at one circus, and many more lost money the same way without a doubt. The way of doing the trick is: in his right hand concealed by the second, third and fourth fingers are one and two dollar bills. If a five or ten is to be changed he uses the one, and if a twenty the two dollar bill. In the hurry which almost always prevails the bill handed back is put in the wallet without looking at it, and you are out four,

nine or eighteen dollars as the case may be. It is of no use to hunt for your money after you have parted with the thief, because he will swear that you are trying to beat him and the circus men will swear that he is not in their employ. Always be on the watch and if they try the steal make them fork over your money immediately. If they hesitate knock them down and take it, as was our intention had the Dorris & Colvin thief delayed us a minute. The papers of the country should expose this case, as thereby they will save their readers money."

"The short corn crop had its effect on the circus attendance," the *Blade* noted.



The Dorris & Colvin steam calliope in 1887. The wagon was built for Dorris in 1883 by Ohlsen. It was sold at auction on February 23, 1888 to the Barnum show where it remained for many years. Circus World Museum collection.

"However, the proprietors cleared enough to bridge over a shortage in same other town."

A more impressive piece of piracy than the scheme of the money changer was unrecorded in the Concordia papers but appeared in the Junction City *Daily Union* on the following Monday: "Postmaster Pepperill, of Concordia, had a run of bad luck show day. He went to the circus, and as the parade passed by his office the clerks all ran to the front, and same slick gentleman went in the back way and stole \$1,500 in stamps and \$200 in money. His bondsmen promptly made it up."

Dorris & Colvin arrived in Junction City on Sunday for the exhibitions of the following day, August 29. The *Union* offered a few scraps of information.

"While the circus was unloading their stock at the depot Sunday morning, one of their horses had his leg broken.

"Between forty and fifty of the show people put up at the Bartell over Sunday, and worried the boarders.

"A handsome rain fell this forenoon, but it put but a temporary damper on the

circus. The parade was made between showers in good shape.

"The rain to-day is bad for the show, but the good it will do the country is incalculable."

Advertising for the Salina date of August 30 began with the arrival on August 10 of the circus advertising car. The *Salina Republican* ran two-column ads on August 13, 20 and 27 while the *Weekly Herald* scored only on the 18th and 25th. Both papers carried only one handout each, the *Herald* "quoting" the *Indianapolis Journal* and the *Republican* "quoting" the *Kansas City Times* of August 2.

Three days before the exhibitions the *Republican* had finished with Dorris & Colvin and never again mentioned the show, but following the appearance the *Herald* had a few things to report.

"Everybody, or most everybody, was out to see the parade this forenoon. The parade was a big one, and as complete as the crowd of 8,000 people, men, women and children ever witnessed in this city."

The official population of Salina was 4,009.

"Four bands dispersed good music and a calliope brought up the rear. Chariots and cages were in goodly numbers, and it was not necessary to string them out to make a good showing. Elephants, camels, zebras and other animals were a feature. The children were not forgotten; there was entertainment for them in the long string of ponies and mules, the clowns and the grotesque figures on the cages."

The *Weekly Herald* was quoting its parent, the *Daily Herald*.

"The side-show accompanying Dorris & Colvin was patronized largely by people from the city and country," the *Weekly Herald* reported. "The price charged to get in was 10 cents, but to get out cost same of them a great deal more. They have a scheme which was well patronized, especially by the country people, as follows: They have an electric machine which they claim is free for everybody. After a lady or gentleman had tried how much electricity they could stand they gave them a blank to take behind a large curtain to be filled out, which cost them all the way from 25 cents up. We saw several parties who had been beat out of their money on this scheme. We warn people against any thing of that kind, as you know not who is 'capping' for them--perhaps same individuals living in the city."

Publicity for the Beloit stand of August

31 began on June 30 with an ad which ran for nine consecutive weeks in the Beloit *Courier*, a weekly newspaper.

Five handouts appeared in the *Courier* including the one quoted below:

"WALK-IN-THE-LIGHT.

A Remarkable Choctaw Chieftain.

"In a very little while now our people will have a chance to see one of the most noted Indian Chiefs in America. This distinguished personage in none other than 'Walk-in-the-Light,' the famous Choctaw Chieftain who held at bay, with only fifty braves under his command, a whole regiment of U. S. regulars in a mountain pass for more than two weeks, and then would have made them surrender but for the timely arrival of reinforcements. But (shudder not gentle reader) the Chieftain's greatest (?) achievements have been the midnight marauding attacks made on defenseless men, women and children, and his glory (?) has been measured by his gory deeds. He is now a reconstructed redman, and wonderful indeed is the change bro't by the civilizing influence of religion. 'Walk-in-the-Light' is now a professed Christian, and is as modest and unobtrusive a person as can well be found. He leads the Indian tribes who will appear with their squaws, papooses, medicine men, counsellors, wigwams, ponies, etc., etc., with that wonder of the world, John B. Doris and E. D. Colvin's New Colossal unification of great shows which will exhibit at BELOIT, on WEDNESDAY, AUG. 31, in all its superlative splendor and overshadowing greatness. 'Walk-in-the-Light' is the ruling spirit of the Indians in the Wild West department of the great Shows, and when Capt. Elmer E. Stubbs, (the Restless Spirit of the Plains) will daily have ended his remarkable shooting with the revolver, rifle and shotgun, 'Walk-in-the-Light' will transpire the centers of bullseyes and other things, and will perform some of the most marvelous bow and arrow shooting ever beheld."

The *Kiowa Herald* of August 11 presented a different view of the paragon when it reported an Indian uprising that was put down by Marshal Lane.

"On Tuesday 'Walk in the Light,' the Choctaw Indian who kills Custer twice a day for a livelihood in the Dorris circus, partook too freely of the fluid extract of prohibition and getting tired of the monotony of Custer killing, he proceeded to exercise his pedal extremities on his squaw with such force that the dusky

damsel had to be saturated with electric liniment before she could play her part. Marshal Lane hearing of the fracas bearded the lion in his wigwam and transferred the gentleman to the sweat box where he languished until sufficient of the bug juice had evaporated to enable him to rally his

was extremely embarrassing, as the gentleman from classic salty backed out with his broad brimmed straw hat held closely under the back suspender buttons and his face bowed low toward the earth, blazing like the setting sun. A patch about an acre in area, clearly visible as the gentleman stands with his back toward you, is an unmistakable mark of the devastation those little heathen innocently committed."

The Doris & Colvin advertising car arrived in Topeka August 16, and the town was duly papered while Thomas R. Perry made the rounds of the news offices and placed ads in three of the daily papers. Perry was no stranger to Topeka, having appeared several times in the city during the winter months as manager of the Pete Baker theatrical company.

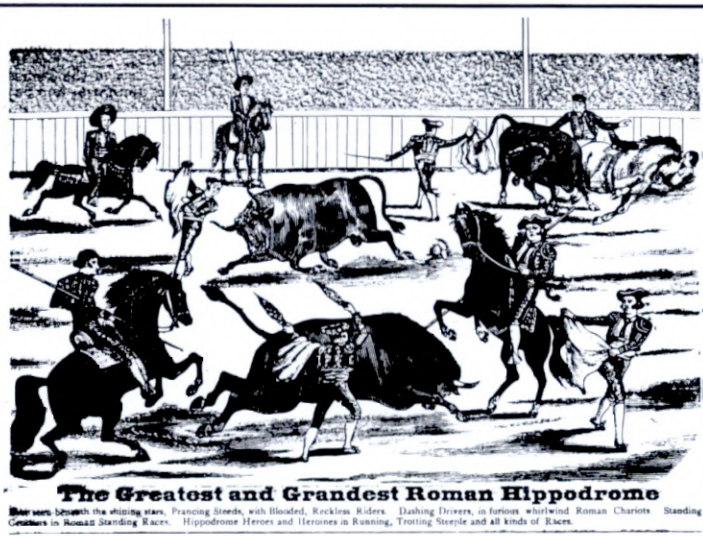
Even before the arrival of the advance brigade Doris & Colvin received a mention in the news columns of the *State Journal* of August 15 under

the heading of,

"Circus Life Without Spangles.

"Circus life was not pictured in its brightest colors by John W. Packard in the police court this morning. He arrived in Topeka on a 'brakeman's pass' Saturday morning with fifteen cents in his pocket with which he bought a watermelon, same sausage and several buns. The police judge made no remarks on the evil consequences of such a diet but allowed Packard to give a detailed account of his adventures with Doris & Colvin's circus. It transpired that he was something of a musician, that is he put coal into the furnace that runs the calliope. For ten long and weary days John fired up that disreputable old calliope as it took its stately march up the street, tooting the Carnival of Venice, or something worse, and in the end of that time he was paid \$3.35 in silver. His was evidently not one of the 'princely salaries' advertised on the bills, so he quit and came to Topeka where he went to sleep in a box car and was run in. He was discharged and told never to be caught firing a calliope or sleeping in a box car again."

Perry did his job well. The first ad appeared on the 17th in the *Commonwealth*. The *Journal* and the *Democrat* both carried ads on the 19th. In the 17 days preceding the exhibitions of September 3 the *Journal* ran three handouts; the *Commonwealth*, four; and the *Democrat*, five. Advertising brigade No. 2 arrived on the 24th and checked into Allen Sells' Windsor hotel.



The Greatest and Grandest Roman Hippodrome

Here were, beneath the blazing stars, Frantic Stunts, with blooded, Reckless Riders, Dashing Drivers, in furious whirlwind Roman Chariots, Standing Gentlemen in Roman Stirling Races, Hippodrome Heroes and Heroines in Running, Trotting, Steeple and all kinds of Races.

This illustration from a 1887 Doris & Colvin herald suggested that bull fights were a part of the performance. Pfening Archives.

braves in the Little Big Horn and kill the much killed Custer again."

A man from Salt Creek visited the side show at Beloit and, according to the *Courier*, unintentionally became the star of the show.

"At the circus, last week, there was an embarrassing scene in the sideshow. They had a couple of dwarfs that could lift monstrous weights, and a gentleman from the classic shades of Salt Creek was induced to permit the prodigies to try their muscle by lifting him from the ground. Now the gentleman kicks the beam at about 250 avoirdupois, or thereabouts, and on that occasion wore a suit of light weight blue flannel. The little gnomes, one on each side, took hold of his pant-a-unmentionables, just under the appendage of his short sack coat, and hitched up on them in order to get a better hold, and the material became awful taut so that the next hitch left a frightful rent just above each knee. The situation was very grave--the gentleman excitedly warning the Fejees to desist, exclaiming, 'don't tear my pants!' but as they were foreigners who couldn't understand a word, they gave another heave, and then--ah! The ladies' fans came into requisition, because the material couldn't stand everything and the victim was dressed in light fighting trim. Suffice it to say the situation

Perry returned to Topeka on August 30, and stayed through Circus Day, September 3.

The *Democrat* of September 2 reported that, "Kansas has 71 daily and 775 weekly newspapers, according to a count made by Mr. Adams, secretary of the Historical society. This is an increase of 46 daily and 329 weeklies since June, 1885. Secretary Adams preserves files of all papers published in the state."

One hundred years later nearly every paper ever published in Kansas is on microfilm at the Kansas Historical Society Research Center in Topeka.

The *Journal* on show day, September 3, reported that the tents were "pitched at the corner of Thirteenth Street and Topeka Avenue. Their canvas is all new and is really deserving of the name it bears (Great), for they certainly put up larger and better tents than any company that has ever visited this city."

The only review that was not the work of Tom Perry appeared in the *Capital* of September 4.

"THE CIRCUS

Doris & Colvin's Colossal Show.

"Doris & Colvin's monster circus and new Wild West show reached this city yesterday morning over the Union Pacific from Abilene. When within a mile of the city the engine of a freight train, which was in front of the circus train, left the track and delayed the circus several hours, making the great street parade late in taking place. It was after 12 o'clock when the street parade took place but it was witnessed by thousands of people of the city and vicinity.

"The performances in the afternoon and evening were well attended and all who went were perfectly satisfied with the show. The artistical performances of Satsuma, the Japanese juggler, drew forth rounds of applause from the audience. His feats in balancing and with the Roman cross are the best ever seen in a circus. The trapeze acting of Mlle. Lottie was daring and marvelous and shows her to be a fine performer with a great deal of nerve. The slack wire walking by Mlle. Louie was witnessed with intense interest as it was something out of the ordinary. The wild west was good and the shooting of Captain Stubbs and riding of California Frank as good if not better than anything of the kind ever witnessed in a circus in Topeka. The great thirty horse act by the only Leon was one of the principal fea-



Doris & Colvin tableau wagon with band on top ready for a parade in 1887. Circus World Museum collection.

tures of the performance. Fifteen pairs of fine, high spirited chargers were driven round the hippodrome track by Leon, standing on the last two. It required several men on horseback and in the ring to whip the horses up and keep them in motion, because Leon, who holds thirty reins will if unguarded, speed the hindmost horses so as to overrun the leaders. It is indeed a masterly and thrilling act, and a rare sight is presented as the host of chargers under whip and spur, fly around the arena.

"Two great acts are the Custer massacre and the mail coach robbery. In the former a company of cavalry under Le Roy as Custer, present a startling representation of the massacre at Little Big Horn, and in the latter is seen a perfect portrayal of border bandit warfare.

"The animals in the menagerie were viewed by great crowds and when the lion tamer put his huge pets through their movements, and fed them with raw beef in the cage, the audience held their breath in suspense.

"The show is neat and clean and worthy of a visit by the amusement loving people of any city. Taken as a whole the Doris & Colvin circus is one of the best on the road and free from all annoyances that generally follow and attend great circuses of this kind."

En route from Topeka to Leavenworth the show passed through Tonganoxie. The *Mirror* noted that, "Three show trains of Doris' circus passed through town on the Union Pacific Sunday morning (September 4)."

The show arrived in Leavenworth on Sunday morning and the afternoon was spent in erecting the tents. On Sunday evening the band and Messrs. Colvin and Doris were honored with an Italian dinner hosted by Jesus Melia. The *Standard*

carried the following report:

"ENTERTAINED THE BAND.

"Mr. Jesus Melia, of the National hotel, gave the Italian band of the Doris & Colvin circus, an Italian supper at the National last night, the distinguished guests being Mr. Doris and Mr. Colvin, proprietors of the show, Mr. M. J. O'Neal press agent, Mr. T. B. McIntyre, the equestrian director and Maestro De Pero the leader of the musicians.

Twenty-five covers were laid and the table was surrounded after a concert of Italian opera selections.

"All restraint was cast aside, ceremony dispensed with and such decorum and table etiquette as characterizes a supper partaken of by true gentlemen. Melifilous, classic, Italian, undefiled was the principal medium of thought and speech. The sons of the land of the vintage gave 'Doc' Colvin, a lesson in the art of masticating macaroni, which that gentleman vainly essayed to learn, but could not down more than twenty yards of the 'Spaghettta.' He admitted, however, that it was a fine diet.

"Jesus delivered a welcoming address in Italian and bade his guests partake of the good things."

The *Standard* carried no review of the show, but two sad happenings appeared in the news.

"An old veteran ring horse 'Charley' belonging to the Doris & Colvin circus was attacked with Colic while enroute from Topeka yesterday morning and when the train stopped he was dead. He had been in the service a great many years and the people were much attached to him. He was valued at \$1,000."

"A CIRCUS MAN DROWNED.

Michael Farron Jumps into the Missouri and Ends His Career.

"An episode not dawn on the program of Doris & Colvin's circus, happened at the river near the union depot last night about midnight. While the men were all busy loading the circus wagons on the cars at the Missouri Pacific to go to Atchison, a gang near the depot was startled by a cry from a canvas man named Michael Farron, an Irishman, and several saw him making toward the bank of the river with rapid strides. Some one called to him when he answered in an excited tone, 'Don't stop me. I'm going to drown myself.'

"One of the gang, however, tried to

stop him, telling him not to make a fool of himself. Farron pushed him rudely aside, causing him to fall, and sped on to the river and plunged in, at a point about twenty yards south of the depot. The mob gathered on the bank, but not knowing the river, none ventured in to save the man whose intention to drown himself was now plainly apparent. Farron, after the first plunge, rose to the surface, but made no attempt to save himself, and soon sank again to rise a few seconds afterward and then disappear, not to return alive. The men could give no account of the suicide than that Farron had been drinking freely of late and had been morose and distant for several days.

"He joined the circus at Auburn, New York, last spring, but no one seemed to know his antecedents. It is said he had trouble with one of the canvas men several days ago and had threatened to get even with him about some alleged grievance, but the trouble was not of a serious nature.

"Farron's body had not been found at noon to-day."

The city of Atchison collected \$220 from Doris & Colvin for the privilege of exhibiting there on Tuesday, September 6.

On August 27 the Atchison *Globe* hoped "that John B. Doris, owner of the great tented exhibition, will not forget his days of adversity. THE GLOBE remembers when Mr. D. had but one elephant, which he introduced into the ring as the largest elephant in the world, the smallest elephant in the world, the only white elephant in the world, and the only coal black elephant in the world."

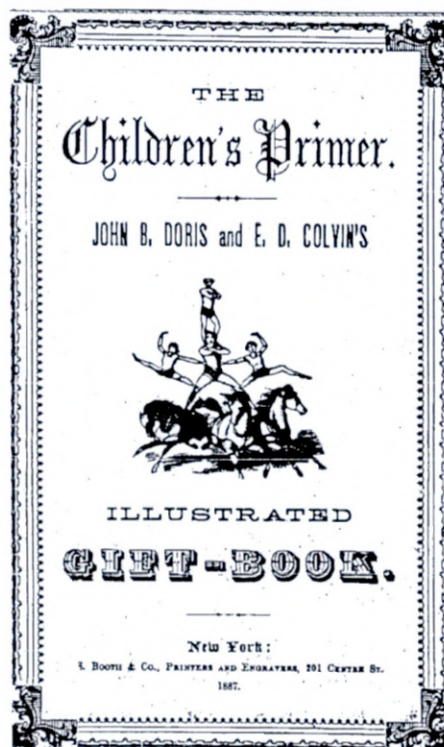
While the *Globe* was reminiscing about Doris' elephant, Adam Forepaugh had a gang of bill posters smothering the town with "WAIT" paper, advising the people to be patient and stay home until the Great Forepaugh Show arrived on September 26. The *Globe* held the opinion that "few people pay attention to the big WAIT signs which always appear when two circuses are billed for the same month."

"It is no more than the truth to say that the Doris show has been wonderfully improved since its last visit to Atchison (1884)," the *Globe* proclaimed on show day, September 6. "Whether this is the result of its consolidation with Mr. Colvin, or the result of experience and years, we do not know, but it is certain that the show is much larger than ever before. The parade this morning was one of the most creditable ever seen on the streets of Atchison."

The vanity of women attracted the attention of a *Globe* reporter. "There are mighty few women who do not imagine that they have pretty arms. Out of twenty women who were watching the circus pa-

rade to-day, a reporter noticed that fifteen of them had made arrangements to show their arms." What would the reporter have noticed in 1990?

"Lean and bald headed Mr. Doris, the circus man, who is represented on the bills as stout and curly headed, is in better humor this year than common," according to the *Globe*. "Let us hope that he is making money, he deserves to . . . Doris is a good fellow, if he is bald headed."



This children's booklet was issued by the Doris & Colvin show in 1887. Dunn-Tibbals collection.

The *Globe* pointed out a fact of circus life that is seldom recognized by the casual circus patron.

"A great many people regret that nearly every circus performance is spoilt by the yelling of the privilege men, but this is not be wondered at when it is remembered that the privileges of a circus often take in more money than the big show itself. The privileges include the side shows, the concert, the lemonade stands, the song book sales, etc."

Following Circus Day the *Globe* was swollen with circus news.

"Ella Stokes, the bareback rider who appeared in the Doris show last night, is Mrs. John B. Doris, wife of the proprietor.

"The fierce Maori chief who appeared in the circus side show yesterday afternoon spent the evening in helping to load the tents. The fierce Maori is in reality a negro. There was a Maori chief with the side show at one time, but he died, and a

negro tent hand was substituted. The principal merit of this brief sketch is that it is true. Bill Doris, the side show blower, who is a brother of the proprietor, said in his talk yesterday afternoon that his Maori was a great and good man in his own country, and that he was generally a rare curiosity. Mr. Doris says a 'faked up' curiosity answers the purpose as well as the genuine thing. Many of the shows advertising troupes of Indians in connection with Wild West performances really have only two or three Indians, the others being 'faked up.' Mr. Doris further added that an Indian around a show was a great nuisance, for an Indian is always a great loafer and lunkhead. A real cowboy is worthless around a show, for he does not seem to have much artistic sense, therefore many of the cowboys seen with circuses are bogus. The real cowboy of the plains, it may be remarked, does not look at all like the circus cowboy.

"How are your folks," said Doris & Colvin's Circasian lady to Abe Friedenburg yesterday. 'My folks,' cried Abe in astonishment, 'how do you know I have any folks?' 'Because,' said the Circasian lady, 'I used to wash dishes at their restaurant.'

"If it is true, as alleged, that the town was full of thieves yesterday, by reason of the circus, the police did their duty exceedingly well, for not a trick was turned all day.

"A circus man did a very clever thing at the show last night. Rushing out into the ring, he stopped the music, and wanted to know if Dr. Smith was in the audience; if so, he was wanted at the front door. 'In the same connection,' the circus man continued, 'I desire to say that our concert is a good one, and that the price will be ten cents.' The concert announcement was hissed before the doctor snap was worked.

"The big rattlesnake that attracted so much attention in John H. Brown's window yesterday was killed last night. This was accomplished by the use of chloroform. The snake charmer connected with the Doris & Colvin show declined to take the reptile, declaring that he made it a rule never to have a dangerous snake around him."

"A long list of acts was gone through with at the Doris & Colvin's circus last night, many of which were excellent, but for some reason there was no applause. Indeed, when the man came out to announce the concert there was hissing. Is it possible that the people are at last tiring of circuses? It was believed at one time that they never would, but the circus managers themselves now say that there must be some decided change in the business, or the people will quit patronizing tented shows. There is reason why the people should become disgusted with cir-

cuses. Many leading managers do not hesitate to deceive, and there has been nothing new in a circus for so long that we have forgotten when the last new act was presented. There are some conscientious circus managers, but as a rule they are a lot of imitators, who do not scruple to deceive from the greatest to the smallest particular."

The Doris & Colvin's Colossal Shows, Managed and Conducted by Brains and Capital," played Hiawatha on September 8. The *Brown County World* had little to say about the show before or after the exhibitions. The editor did note that, "The *WORLD* got complimentary tickets to the circus and the gentlemanly proprietors paid their advertising bill without a kick. It is a good show, and although the elephants and camels walk round inside the tent in the most immodest way and the clowns got off the same funniness laughed at when father was a boy, we forgive them--they are constructed on such plans and specifications."

In another column the *World* ran the following: "A circus man generally strikes terror to the hearts of even brave men. No one cares to quarrel with him and he is a complete monarch under canvass. During the concert a big section hand seemed to have some notion of not paying to see the performance. A little bit of a tough looking sort of circus man made a break at him and as sort of a tantalizer threw his hat to the ground. The big fellow was big enough to eat the circus man but he did not resent the insult. Then the little tough grabbed the b.f. and dragged him to the tent door and gave him a touching farewell in the shape of a big kick and you could have heard a pin drop so intent was the interest manifested by the audience in this particular feature of the show."

The *Marshall County Democrat* paid scant attention to the exhibitions at Marysville on September 9. "The street parade of Doris & Colvin's circus was the most imposing one that ever passed through the streets of Marysville. The per-

formances were also excellent and many new features were included among them."

"Of greater interest is the report that, 'The train which carried Doris & Colvin's circus from here to Fairbury, Nebraska ran off the track about three miles northwest of Hanover, and was detained about eight hours. No performance on that account at Fairbury on Saturday last.'"

The season of 1887 in Kansas consisted mainly of the tours of two large shows. S. H. Barrett's New United Monster Shows played 34 Kansas towns. Doris & Colvin played at least 35. The route of Doris & Colvin through Kansas follows. The asterisk after the population figure indicates towns that were also played by Barrett.

August 1, Kansas City, Missouri; August 2, Ottawa, 6626*; August 3, Burlington, 2819; August 4, Garnett, 2107; August 5, Chanute, 1911; August 6, Independence, 4115; August 8, Winfield, 4183; August 9, Kiowa, under 1000*; August 10, Medicine Lodge, under 1000*; August 11, Wellington, 6346*; August 12, Caldwell, 1970*; August 13, Arkansas City, 3328*; August 15, Wichita, 16,023*; August 16, Newton, 5128; August 17, Hutchinson, 4251*; August 18, Great Bend, 1499*; August 19, McPherson, 2530*; August 20, Eldorado, 4573; August 22, Emporia, 7759*; August 23, Eureka, 2207*; August 24, Osage City, 3633*; August 25, Manhattan, 2735*; August 26, Clay Center, 3830*; August 27, Concordia, 3002*; August 29, Junction City, 3555*; August 30, Salina, 4009; August 31, Beloit, 2003*; September 1, Minneapolis, 1779*; September 2, Abilene, 3516*; September 3, Topeka, 23,499*; September 5, Leavenworth, 29,268; September 6, Atchison, 15,599; September 7, St. Joseph, Missouri; September 8, Hiawatha, 2248; September 9, Marysville, 1932; October 14, Ft. Scott, 7867 and October 15, Parsons, 7245.

Twenty Kansas towns were blessed with both shows, but the dates were distanced enough that neither suffered any loss because of the other, the closest being 56 days. Doris & Colvin played two villages of less than 1,000 population; Barrett played seven. Generally, Barrett fared better, drawing larger crowds due in part to a name that was well known in Kansas. Doris had exhibited extensively in Kansas in 1884, but the combination of Doris and Colvin was an unknown quantity, causing many editors to express surprise at the size and quality of the company. Another factor of greater importance was the declining economy as the summer wore on. Times were hard in Kansas in 1887, but Doris & Colvin did well enough to make their Kansas sojourn a winner.

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